Commentary
April 1996

American Power—A Guide for the Perplexed

Robert Kagan

Shakespeare, Shylock, and the Jews

William Meyers

Welfare Fixers

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The Four Questions—A Story

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Physics and the Soul: An Exchange

David Berlinski and Critics

Books in Review

Elizabeth Kristol • Robert S. Wistrich • Richard Brookhiser
J. Bottum • Midge Decter • Francis Fukuyama

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Commentary
April 1996

Letters from Readers

Physics and the Soul

To the Editor:

Under physics, David Berlinski suggests, the soul of man has suffered a grievous exposure; but the wind-chill is moderating ["The Soul of Man Under Physics," January]. "For lo," he sings, "the winter is past. . . . The time of singing is come." *I* have suffered grievous hesitation, now moderating as I undertake this reply. For days I agonized: shall I write a note about this elegant, seductive statement on science, or shut up and enjoy the poetry? A mathematician and literary stylist capsulizes natural science in the modern world; he gets the science pretty much right; he dismisses postmodernist palter; he sees the *angst* that is created by science and mathematics; and he offers hope for relief from fear and trembling in a new science of consciousness, topping off with the voice of the turtle!

So what's the problem? . . . Well: current putdowns of science fall into two categories. Of Type A is a recent letter to the *Wall Street Journal*, whose writer explained why "theistically oriented" parents prefer private schools for their children. It is because " . . . they escape the naturalistic science curriculum of the vast majority of public institutions." The oxymoronic idea of a *non*-naturalistic science is not just the letter-writer's: it is *abroad*, marketed to crowds on the creationist borscht circuit and in many colleges by big names in that league. Type B is characterized, accurately, by Mr. Berlinski himself: " . . . the rich fruity preposterous discourse of the academic Left," whence " . . . the large project of the physical sciences has been shown at last to be socially regressive, or politically hegemonistic, or hopelessly gendered, or ethnically contaminated. . . ."

What the problem is, then, is that the whole, despite abundant calories, and for all the artistic touches (which I admire in Mr. Berlinski's writings), leaves a bad taste, a false impression, and false comfort. . . . Mr. Berlinski's essay has a message, intended or not (I cannot tell), which for some readers will certainly survive the poem. Strangely, it is of both Type A and Type B. Despite its fine summaries of science, it is a putdown: and that is what Commentary's readers, no friendlier to scientific hubris than the list-members of SciFraud on the Internet, will take away.

Mr. Berlinski finds this funny: that philosopher John Searle affirms ("magisterially") the irrefragability of Darwinian theory and the atomic theory of matter. Why funny? Because they are "19th-century theories that could both vanish into the void without affecting the contemporary scientific world view in the slightest." Is this true? No. Most currently important theories of science arose in the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th. Not one is the same as it was at the start. Darwinism today includes genetics, cell biology, behavioral biology, biophysics, cladistics, mathematical modeling. The idea of descent with modification, via natural selection, remains a solid floor; but the larger edifice is entirely of this century and beautiful, unexpected pieces are added to it every day. That is surely what Searle means. Limited space prevents my adding the parallel for the "atomic theory of matter," but I could, without too far exceeding my qualifications.

Have these two theories "somehow preempted the possibilities for the description of the universe,

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the consolation of the soul"? About consolation of the soul I do not know: the horrors of Victorian idealism were aimed, as the crusty logician David Stove showed, precisely at "consoling the soul" in the face of science. Victorian idealism failed; it is a joke. I doubt that chaos and complexity will do better. I do know about description of the universe: evolutionary thought is now central to astrophysics and cosmology, and those do not seem to have had their descriptive styles cramped. Among the issues of description in biology—say of the brain—are deep problems of atomic physics: the mechanics of fit, for example, of signal molecules to receptors in neurons. Could Darwinism and atomism "vanish into the void" without leaving a ripple? Not a chance!

Is it true that "Chaos [theory] is a cultural corrosive, one dissolving the tight connection between a deterministic mathematical model and the delivery of a predictable future"? Literati and the screenwriters of *Jurassic Park* think so; most mathematicians I know do not. It is *lovely* mathematics, full of surprises. It *is* mathematics; and as Mr. Berlinski notes, a 19th-century genius, Henri Poincaré, saw it. With its aid, we see now the chaos within some grossly predictable systems, such as the human heartbeat and the solar system; but the beat proceeds in most of us, most of the time, at 60 to 80 per minute; and NASA's numbers-crunchers have no trouble finding, not only planets, but also their smallest moons, including Jupiter's (Mr. Berlinski: "hanging like so many testicles"). As to complexity, why, yes, "It is the world's complexity that is humanly interesting"; but it is *not* true that "Stars blazing glumly in the night sky" are in any serious sense *simple*, or, for that matter, glum. Has not "What are the stars . . . ?" been a question, not only for Irish dramatists but for all humans, *ab initio*?

The artificial-intelligence wars, of whose issues Mr. Berlinski offers a good précis, are nevertheless nowhere near the conclusion he suggests, obliquely, as imminent; and the consciousness wars, ongoing in and out of natural science for centuries, do not allow the abandonment of *existing* science and mathematics. No problem is more frustrating; but Mr. Berlinski's scorn for physicists who see God in particles or equations is as justly addressed to the "unorthodox quantum physicists [who] have argued for the ubiquity of mind throughout the cosmos." I wonder whether he approves of the French sociology of science that ponders dialogue between marine biologists and sea scallops?

Is "molecular biology . . . not a physical science at all, but a discipline struggling to express the properties of living systems in a vocabulary and by means of concepts unlike those needed elsewhere"? Well, no. Of course I am only one molecular biologist, and aging. Still, to the best of my knowledge, our struggles are with making chemical (hence physical) sense of the interdigitated processes by which cells live. Heroes of molecular biology, like the once-great and late-sad Linus Pauling, mastered physics to elucidate molecular structure and biological function. The effort does not appear to be ending. It may well be that we shall need unimagined means to explain how thousands of genes encode—if they do—billions of specific connections in the brain. But consolation for the soul does not seem to be one.

So, a qualified and troubled hail to David Berlinski! He offers a good view of the forward progress of understanding, if not of the soul, "under physics." But in so doing, he has, for purposes simply rhetorical or, for all I know, religious, given the impression that it is all quite inadequate anyway, and that knowledge now on the horizon will blow it all away, so to reunite us with reality. Neither he nor COMMENTARY should offer such comfort to Luddites.

PAUL R. GROSS
Center for Cell Signaling
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

David Berlinski presents a mystical picture of recent developments in science that distorts how present-day scientists think. Several important natural dynamical systems have turned out to be chaotic; this means that over time small variations in initial conditions can give rise to large variations. But that is all it means. No one ever supposed that atmospheric science would permit precise prediction of the weather months in advance. Indeed, the mathematician John Von Neumann, one of the first to undertake the use of computers for weather prediction, said something like, "Either the weather equations are stable, in which case we can predict the weather, or they are unstable, in which case we can control it." . . .

The relation of biology to physics is like that of computing to physics. Animals and programmed computers are physical systems that develop in accordance with physical laws. However, the actual structures that are realized in life or in computer programs are only a tiny fraction of all those that are possible. Therefore, biologists must study which of the many possibilities actually developed in nature and computer scientists must decide which of the many possible computer programs will be useful. Nothing mystical there.

It is a mistake to suppose that either physicists or biologists ever expected anything else. To make a case that they did requires distorting the meaning of what they actually said.

Roger Penrose is distinguished all right, as Mr. Berlinski notes, but hardly any biologists, physicists, mathematical logicians, computer scientists, or analytic philosophers have accepted his argument that consciousness requires new laws of physics. (Solomon Feferman deals authoritatively with Penrose's logical arguments in the online journal *Psycolloquy*.)

Consciousness is a difficult phenomenon, but progress in studying it is being made both by phys-

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iological research and by artificial-intelligence research. Present-day robots take in visual information, compute with it, and take physical action on the basis of these computations; all this requires the identification of objects and determination of their relations. This work is still far below the level of human performance, but I challenge Mr. Berlinski to come up with what he thinks is the easiest task that cannot be performed by machines based on present-day physics.

. . . Scientists just do not think in the flowery, metaphysical way Mr. Berlinski does. A graduate student in any science who was impressed by this rhetoric would be unlikely to make discoveries leading to a thesis until he recovered.

JOHN MCCARTHY
Computer Science Department
Stanford University
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR:

David Berlinski's article starts almost poetically, in an attempt to show the . . . unhappiness with the realities uncovered by science. In this he may well be correct. But whether one is happy or unhappy with any observation, or collection of observations, one's personal feelings have no bearing on the ultimate validity of those observations.

Mr. Berlinski then cites C.P. Snow, who made the point that contemporary culture was divided into two opposing camps, the scientific and the humanistic. I agree that there is a dichotomy, but perceive it to be not between science and humanism, but between science and magic. By magic I mean a thought process that makes assertions which are based on myth rather than on logical, empirically verifiable, objective reality and which requires nothing beyond imagination. If one has no observed facts to limit one's conception of something, then its possible variables are infinite. Anything one might say about it is as true or as false as any other.

Science, on the other hand, is based on objective reality, which has three components. It relies on observation through the physical senses (as expanded by microscopes, telescopes, etc.). It demands that those observations be reproducible. And it demands that those observations be observable by others—anything that does not meet these criteria is not scientific.

The fact that human observations have validity has been addressed (see my book, *M-E: The God Within*, 1992). In spite of their shortcomings, sensory observations must have some validity. If they did not, how could we build computer chips and atom bombs? If the observations we use to build them are entirely without value, then we have built these things by pure chance, like a monkey with a typewriter producing the *Encyclopedia Britannica* by hitting keys at random.

Mr. Berlinski dismisses mathematics as "Messy, disorganized, ideologically confused. . . ." But, as with sensation, mathematics enables us to manipulate the particles that make up the universe so as to build computer chips and atom bombs. What we are able to accomplish in manipulating the "stuff of the universe" (Einstein's "M" and "E") proves that our mathematics and our model of the universe derived from it are valid.

Quantum theory tells us that all knowledge is statistical, that there are no absolutes. And 80 years of careful observations, by men as brilliant as Einstein (who was hostile to the idea that "God would play dice with the universe"), have failed to find error in the theory.

Mr. Berlinski states:

> The world, the physical sciences affirm, is not merely depictable, but *comprehensible*. It has a rational structure. It is animated by a great plan.

Actually, the universe is depictable, but comprehensible only within limits understood by scientists. Questions such as "why?" and "for what purpose?" are human questions that have no answers and have no place in science. Science can measure the mass of a proton. But the question of why that mass is different in different elements, differing by energy differences ($E=MC^2$), is meaningless. And to suggest that the universe "is animated by a great plan" is theology and not science.

Mr. Berlinski states that science affirms that it can predict the future. And he also states (apparently ironically) that "In contemporary culture . . . prophecy is a debased currency. . . ." But the idea that science is able to predict the future is Mr. Berlinski's and is not claimed by science or supported by physics. Predictions concerning physical events are *statistical*, not absolute. The future is completely blank and not knowable, because it never exists! So much for prophecy! . . .

The heart of my disagreement with Mr. Berlinski occurs when he discusses "soul." Physics and "soul" are irreconcilable. One is the process of rigorous, objective investigation and thought, the other an imaginary wish, or, at best, a philosophical conjecture. If by "soul" he is referring to consciousness, all scientific evidence on brain function supports the theory that consciousness is the product of the biological machine that is the central nervous system. No magic is involved (see Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: A Scientific Search for the Soul*, 1994).

These comments are an incomplete refutation of Mr. Berlinski. It would take a book to do that project justice. But refutation of the concept he puts forth is vital if man is to save himself from himself. Magical thinking is the curse of mankind. Jews know of the slaughter of their brothers and sisters by the Crusaders, the Cossacks, the Nazis. All these butcheries were based on magical thinking. And we do not have to look to the past. Yugoslavia, with similar horrors, is with us today. While the press fails to stress this vital point, Eastern Orthodox Serbs kill Roman Catholic Croats and both kill Bosnian Muslims. Magical thinking is at the heart of these mad atrocities.

JOSEPH R. ABRAHAMSON, M.D.
San Diego, California

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TO THE EDITOR:

David Berlinski says that the atomic theory of matter could "vanish into the void" without affecting the contemporary scientific world view in the slightest. Does he really think that the work of Ernest Rutherford, Niels Bohr, and many other physicists is either incorrect or so irrelevant that it could be rejected without detriment to our understanding of nature?

Mr. Berlinski implies that there is an incompatibility or opposition between the mathematics of continuity (calculus and its ramifications) and that which applies to finite systems. But in fact they coexist in a fruitful symbiosis. In both classical and quantum physics, discrete energy levels and frequencies of vibration emerge in a natural way from a continuous background when boundary conditions are imposed upon the solutions of differential equations. Conversely, discrete and finite computational methods are routinely used to approximate the values of continuous functions. Continuous probability distributions (e.g., the "bell curve") can provide good descriptions of biological phenomena. Molecular biology deals with molecules, which obey the laws of quantum mechanics. . . .

Belief in the predictability of the future, Mr. Berlinski claims, is characteristic of the Western scientific imagination. Theoretical determinism does not, however, imply practical predictability. The French astronomer and mathematician Pierre Laplace knew, nearly two centuries ago, that our power to predict is very limited, and that only a superhuman intellect could perform the calculations need to ensure that "the future, as well as the past, would be present to its eyes." His successors knew it too, before the advent of quantum theory or the current emphasis upon chaos, randomness, and complexity.

With the exception, mainly, of some psychologists committed to behaviorism, scientists do not maintain that consciousness is an illusion or that "reality contains only atoms and the void." Materialists do believe that conscious experience occurs if, and only if, an appropriately structured physical substratum, i.e., a brain, is present. A corollary is that the human mind is not an immaterial entity, inhabiting some astral plane, that can reach into the world and produce effects by violating physical laws. Nor are events caused by ghosts, angels, or demons. Conceivably, these assertions could be refuted, but rhetoric about "vivid, light-enraptured awareness" and the like will not do it. . . .

Mr. Berlinski refers to "the ache that today affects the human heart," and to the soul, yearning for love, happiness, and God. He is quite right to imply that science offers no solace for aching hearts, no consolation for the "soul," no promises of personal salvation. It deals with facts (often described as cold facts) and with theories that explain them. . . .

If scientists themselves are losing their confidence, as Mr. Berlinski says, the same is true of many who some years ago would have looked to traditional religions to satisfy the "transcendental urges" that he treasures. But he need not worry; numerous alternatives are available today to serve the same purpose. For a few dollars per minute you can phone a psychic consultant for advice from the Beyond. Follow the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and learn, along with other meditators, how to tranquilize the world as well as the technique of levitation. The Church of Scientology promises to clear your

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DAVID A. SHOTWELL
Alpine, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

While David Berlinski is clearly right to greet the extravagant claims of some scientists with skepticism, I do not share his perception of science, particularly mathematical physics, as a spiritually constraining system. I am someone who devotes his entire time to exploring the Ultimate Questions, and because I share Mr. Berlinski's view that science is not interested in those questions, until recently I restricted my search to other cultures, teaching ancient Greek philosophy and medieval theology, sitting in Zen temples. But lately I decided to give modern physics a look. To my surprise and delight, I have found that this way of looking at things, at least as conceived by Einstein, is a marvelous spiritual path. It does not contradict, but rather in its own cautious way confirms the insights of the other traditions I am familiar with. . . .

Many traditions speak of the arduous task of divesting ourselves of our native ignorance and egotism, our limited frame of reference, if we wish to experience the truth. . . . Studying physics is hard, but less so than the ascetic practices that were previously thought necessary. . . . It could make the spiritual principles taught by earlier traditions accessible to more people. As they become more and more widely known, the qualities of love, respect, humility, peace, and joy they bestow on those fortunate enough to contemplate them could become more widely shared. The character and sayings of Einstein repay study not only for their scientific but also for their human value. The unfortunate military usefulness of physics should not negate its value as a spiritual path.

Like all human productions, our culture's cathedral—its greatest and most beautiful creation, modern physics—is in as shabby and spooky a shape as Mr. Berlinski has described it in his haunting image. It is a noble edifice nonetheless, offering enlightenment as full as that available in other, gaudier halls.

SIDNEY KEITH
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR:

. . . David Berlinski argues that "molecular biology is not a physical science at all, but a discipline struggling to express the properties of living systems in a vocabulary and by means of concepts unlike those needed elsewhere." That is beside the point. Biological and physical sciences are both expressions of the scientific method: observing, drawing conclusions based on observation, testing those conclusions, and reconsidering them in the light of further observations.

In the Book of Genesis, God creates the earth by saying, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear" (1:9). That means the world is flat. The biblical account of Creation is elegant, powerful, and explains everything. Explaining everything in a few simple words, however, bears a certain resemblance to explaining nothing.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
College of Staten Island-CUNY
Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

As I understand him, David Berlinski in "The Soul of Man Under Physics" is saying that science's inability to cope with the concept of soul has been its most serious limitation, and scientists have erred by insisting that the only reality is purely physical (atoms and the void). His essay, which I think is brilliant, was hard for me to follow. . . . For example, what does Mr. Berlinski mean in the section, "Mind Over Matter," when he says, ". . . things move dissectively, toward the fundamental objects and their fundamental properties and laws. The physical universe itself remains meaningless"? And in the next paragraph, how does he know that "a path through the chatter is not dissective, but almost always circular"?

When I had to take calculus years ago, I did not really get it, and I understand little of how computers work. But I think it essential that the many know as best we can what intellectuals are getting at, and in this regard I think David Berlinski and COMMENTARY have served us well.

GEORGE CRISPIN
Auburn, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR:

David Berlinski has beautifully elaborated the limitations of reductionist thinking. Consider that the fundamental physical theories, each with their single mathematical equation, describe the "far-flung processes and properties" of individual particles, be they planets or quarks. But the equations carry no inherent inkling of the wonders that occur when the particles aggregate and emergent integrated systems are formed.

As an example, even in the "simple" physical case of water we have equations describing the actions of groups of individual molecules but no single equation that would predict the nature or even the occurrence of the emergent states of liquids or solids that occur upon integration.

A reductionist approach that informs us of the presence of DNA molecules and of enzymes and the rest of the molecules acting as individual particles can never give us a fundamental equation of what occurs upon molecular integration, producing a living system.

BERNARD ECANOW
Northbrook, Illinois

DAVID BERLINSKI writes:

A number of correspondents have written in alarm to defend the atomic theory of matter and the Darwinian theory of evolution. I did not, in fact, claim that either theory is untrue—only that neither is irrefragable; but I am willing to go farther.

If Darwin's theory of evolution serves merely to express the prevailing hypothesis that there is a natural explanation for life on earth, then it does have rather an unbudgeable as-

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pect. But Darwin's theory is routinely identified with the *specific* mechanism of natural selection, and Darwin himself indicated that other explanations might be forthcoming some day. Not much would have changed in contemporary biology, for example, had it turned out (as the Japanese biologists Kimura and Ohta contended) that neutral mutations rather than natural selection were the governing instrument of biological change.

As for atoms, they no longer figure in anyone's catalog of absolutely elementary particles. On current versions of quantum theory, it is the quantum *field* that comes first, not any of the elementary particles; and fields, I would argue, do not figure in any atomistic catalog, however loosely written.

But now to individual letters.

Paul R. Gross: I am not sure where to locate the gravamen of Mr. Gross's thoughtful and melancholy letter. Have I really pursued the friendship of those who should be my natural enemies? Not so. I do regard astrologers, psychic readers, parapsychologists, faith healers, virtuosos of telekinesis, psychic surgeons, exorcists, past-lives regression counselors, recovered-memory specialists, alien intimates, clairvoyants, numerologists, and semioticians with far less alarm than he does. Let these people caper. What harm do they do? But the degradation of the American academy is another matter. Mr. Gross and I agree on the causes and the culprits. How could he think otherwise?

I am dismayed that Mr. Gross thinks my intention was to dismiss, deride, or discount any of the great scientific achievements I discussed. I have spent my life thinking about mathematics, logic, and the correlative problem of expressing what I know about them in English. Surely it is obvious where my heart lies.

It seems to me Mr. Gross's own critical scruples are often exercised by the easiest of cases. Feminists concerned to find traces of rape in Newton's *Principia* are a source of amusement to us both; I admire Mr. Gross for taking after them. I would admire him more were his fine sense of the outrageous provoked, say, by *schlockmeisters* of artificial intelligence or physicists talking dreamily of non-equilibrium thermodynamics or theorists of self-organization or advocates of artificial life and genetic algorithms. One reason that science has provoked a certain revulsion in the public at large is surely that reasonable men and women can easily determine for themselves that some scientists (and some analytic philosophers) are apt to convey the impression of knowing far more than they do.

Contrary to what writers like Daniel Dennett have suggested, evolutionary theory plays *no* role in astrophysics or cosmology; and atomic physics (of all things!) no role in contemporary neurophysiology. These are dogmatic claims, dogmatically made, but credulous philosophers like Dennett aside, where is the evidence to the contrary?

Mr. Gross is correct to observe that the screenwriters for *Jurassic Park* possessed an insufficiently sophisticated understanding of nonlinear dynamical systems. I thought I indicated as much in writing that chaos has come to seem an explanation for every living shambles. But I am not sure I have followed his other strictures concerning chaos. Some biologists believe that a chaotic regime may be re-

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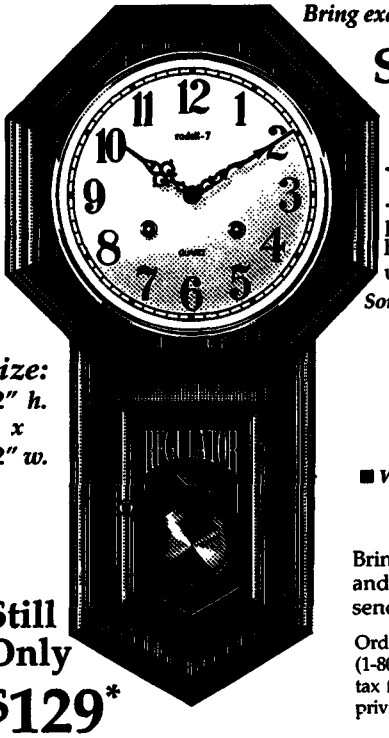

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sponsible both for paroxysmal ventricular fibrillation and primary idiopathic epilepsy; but the work that I have seen is by no means persuasive or even consistent. As for the solar system, Carl Siegel, Andrei Kolmogorov, V.I. Arnold, and Jürgen Moser have in a certain sense established its stability by settling the small divisor problem in celestial mechanics, so I am puzzled by Mr. Gross's reference to chaos within that system. Finally, it is entirely possible that one and the same system of equations may be chaotic for some parametric values and not others—hence the seeming paradox of a chaotic system of equations giving rise to stable predictions.

The stars blazing in the night sky are simple in this sense: to a certain extent, their properties may be described by simple laws. Meaning what? Meaning, the laws succeed in compressing a vast amount of information. This is not only a serious sense of simplicity; it is the *only* sense contingent upon a technically precise definition, the one offered by Kolmogorov and Gregory Chaitin.

"Our struggles," Mr. Gross writes, "are with making chemical (hence physical) sense of the interdigitated processes by which cells live." I do not disagree. My point lay elsewhere. Coming upon the pages of a novel, we may find it useful to determine how the manuscript was produced by an appeal to paper, ink, and the mechanical gears and levers of a typewriter. In order to understand the novel as a literary genre, entirely different conceptual tools are needed. Much the same thing is true in biology. It is thus that I argued that molecular biology is a discipline with its own conceptual structure, one not found in the physical sciences. The very vocabulary that Mr. Gross uses to assess my remarks is evidence of their plausibility. "Coding" is precisely what genes do; but a code is not something needed for the analysis of quantum tunneling.

A final point: it certainly was not my intention to suggest that the scientific knowledge we have acquired is irrelevant *because* it is inadequate. I think Paul Gross knows this. Like many others, I find that as the circle of light enlarges, so too the darkness that surrounds it.

John McCarthy: It has *always* been the historical goal of meteorology to establish long-term weather forecasts, a fact that would have been obvious to Mr. McCarthy had he consulted any text of the 1960's or 1970's, like Andrei Monin's *Weather Forecasting as a Problem in Physics*. The quotation that Mr. McCarthy attributes to John Von Neumann leaves me baffled. Whatever Von Neumann may have meant, the fact is that we can neither predict nor control the weather: surely that is obvious.

Small variations in the initial conditions of a chaotic system may give rise to large variations in its behavior. The best illustration of this phenomenon was provided by (again) Kolmogorov. Imagine two planets identical in all respects. On one planet, a butterfly beats its wings once. How long, Kolmogorov asked, would it take for the weather on these two planets to become completely different? The correct answer is, not long at all—which is very surprising. Chaotic equations are interesting because they sever the link between prediction and determinism. "After quantum mechanics and relativity," the mathematician Steven Smale correctly observed, chaos "is a new challenge to the determinism of Newton and Leibnitz." Some mathematicians have expressed indifference to the rediscovery of chaos, objecting that they cannot see that the phenomenon has yielded striking new theorems. Mr. McCarthy's animadversions are otherwise: he cannot be persuaded that chaos is physically or humanly interesting. The dispute between us is a matter of taste.

Mr. McCarthy's assertion that "animals and programmed computers are physical systems that develop in accordance with physical laws" invokes a strong analogy that he does not bother to defend. Molecular biology *does* suggest an algorithmic basis for life—the inference is irresistible. But an algorithm is one thing, a living creature is quite another, and we are utterly unable at the present time to determine how a linear string of discrete symbols might give rise to a three-dimensional organism, one capable of a repertoire of almost infinitely plastic behavior. Did "either physicists or biologists ever expect anything else"? That depends on who failed to do the expecting, and what they failed to expect.

When Roger Penrose claimed (in *Shadows of the Mind*) that human mathematicians possess abilities that in principle could not be simulated by a computer, he was recreating an argument first advanced by the philosopher John Lucas. The conclusion to this argument functions as the premise to another and far more speculative one, designed to show that new laws of physics are required to explain consciousness. It is the first argument on which mathematical logicians have cast a clouded eye, but that, *pace* Mr. McCarthy, was not the one I was talking about. I am sorry if he is unsure just where the machine guns are blazing, and, also, that he was unable to discern that I was being ironic about Penrose's discussion of consciousness.

Mr. McCarthy's claim that physiological research and research in artificial intelligence are progressing toward an understanding of consciousness prompts me to ask for an account of his standards of success. Robots may be designed both to accept and to act on visual information, but much the same thing is true of an ordinary light meter. These activities may be considered progress toward an understanding of consciousness only in the sense that broad-jumping may be considered progress in the development of human flight.

To repeat what I said in my essay, consciousness is a feature of our mental life we are unable accurately to describe, let alone ex-

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plain. We open our eyes and our eyes are filled. The thing is a mystery. Despite many confident assertions from computer scientists and analytic philosophers, the case in favor of materialism is abysmally weak.

Joseph R. Abrahamson: Like George Jochnowitz, Dr. Abrahamson believes he has a terrific definition of the scientific method; and like George Jochnowitz, he is wrong.

The distinction between myth and "logical, empirically verifiable, objective reality," is not one that Dr. Abrahamson has intelligibly drawn. In particular, if by "observed facts" he means facts observed by the senses, then his conclusion—that without observed facts, anything goes—makes it very hard to explain the existence of logical and mathematical reasoning.

I agree, of course, that human observations "have validity." Who would deny it? The philosophically interesting task is to provide an *account* of their validity. This is something I cannot do, and neither can anyone else.

Dr. Abrahamson states that because the future does not yet exist it follows that future events cannot be predicted. This involves what can only be called a philosophical miscalculation. Like the future, the past does not now exist; would Dr. Abrahamson argue that events in the past—the date of his birth, say—cannot be specified in the present? And before Dr. Abrahamson commits himself irrevocably to the absurd conclusion that the category of prediction is my invention, he might with profit familiarize himself with developments in contemporary cosmology, a discipline dedicated to scanning the horizon of events to the beginning and the end of time.

As for the claim that "all scientific evidence on brain function supports the theory that consciousness is the product of the biological machine that is the central nervous system," I would ask: a product *how*? No other machine seems to evoke consciousness. A product *in what sense*? Is the mind a physical object *like* the nervous system, or something different? And if different, how is it produced *by* the nervous system and how do the two interact? These have been questions in the philosophy of mind since Descartes, and despite the assurances of scientists like Francis Crick that they have pretty much settled the issue, the problems remain wide open.

I sympathize with the spirit that animates Dr. Abrahamson's reflections on magical thinking: who is in favor of human atrocities? But I believe he is drawing the line in the wrong place. Magical thought involves a commitment to the power of certain symbols, and a belief in action at a distance. The magician utters a few secret words and the world's vault opens. The great scientific theories are, by this standard, full of magic—places where things and forces are described in a powerful secret language and where mysterious fields propagate their influence over vast reaches of space and time. None of this has anything to do with "mad atrocities."

David A. Shotwell: I did not *imply* that there is an incompatibility between continuous and discrete mathematics: it is simply a fact. True, the spectrum of experimental values of a continuous function is both finite and discrete; and finite difference equations are routinely used to approximate the value of ordinary differential equations. Nonetheless, a differentiable manifold and a finite-state automaton are fundamentally different objects. Molecular biology, Mr. Shotwell asserts, deals with molecules, and molecules obey the laws of quantum mechanics. I suppose that this is so, but I cannot help noting that (for computational reasons) quantum theory plays virtually no role whatsoever in biochemistry. The discovery of the genetic code by Watson and Crick suggests that in some absolutely fundamental way, life has something like an algorithmic basis. Nothing like that is remotely true of physical systems. They are simply different.

Materialists, Mr. Shotwell asserts, believe that conscious experience is contingent upon some physical object, "i.e., a brain." This suggests that he has given his allegiance to epiphenomenalism, the view that, like shadows, mental events attend the physical events that cause them. But in the philosophy of mind, epiphenomenalism is a dualist position: there are material objects such as the brain *and* the *im*material conscious experiences they evoke. These conscious experiences, Mr. Shotwell reminds us, are not an illusion. How then to understand his insistence that the human mind is a material entity after all? Why on earth would one physical object (the mind) require a "substratum" in another (the brain)? A single character up there in the cerebral cockpit seems more than enough.

It is in any event unclear to me why Mr. Shotwell believes that any effects produced by an immaterial entity must violate the laws of physics. Physics is full of immaterial entities: the continuum of space and time, the electromagnetic field, the quantum vacuum. By what criterion are we to include an infinite dimensional Hilbert space in our ontological catalog, but not a human or an animal mind?

Sidney Keith: I would not describe mathematical physics as spiritually constraining *or* as spiritually liberating. Einstein viewed physics as a religious quest. At the very end of his life, he wrote in a letter of unbearable poignancy that "for us believing physicists, death is an illusion." I have always wanted to know what Einstein "believed" that persuaded him of this. But it does not matter. Sensitive and refined men and women have endeavored over the past 150 years or so to see in both artistic and scientific experiences the outlines of a system of belief that could satisfy their transcendental desires. I do not think that, in the long run, they have been successful. A great physical theory does what a great physical theory can do. But no more.

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George Jochnowitz: Mr. Jochnowitz's description of the scientific method fails adequately to distinguish between, say, advances in quantum physics and instruction in golf. Both are a matter of "observing, drawing conclusions based on observation, testing those conclusions, and reconsidering them in the light of further observations." Yet no one would urge the inclusion of Greg Norman's *Ten Steps to Better Golf* among texts dealing with the physical sciences. Another way of putting this: although there are any number of scientific practices, science has no more *method* than love.

I would also urge caution before accepting Mr. Jochnowitz's strictures against explaining everything in a few words. Mathematical physics has always been controlled by powerful minimalist urges. Maxwell's original theory of the electromagnetic field required for its expression four homogeneous and four inhomogeneous partial differential equations; using differential forms, mathematicians today can express the theory in two equations, using but eight symbols.

George Crispin: Mr. Crispin asks two questions. Herewith the answers. When I write that in physics things move dissectively downward, I mean that physics is committed to explanations at ever more fundamental levels. Laws give way to laws until we reach the most basic laws of all. When, by contrast, we are talking about human beings (or, I would also argue, animals), we explain ourselves to ourselves in terms of our beliefs, desires, wishes, commitments, passions, secret urges, and the like; these items form a family of concepts in which each member may be explained by reference to the others, but the system as a whole remains inexplicable in terms of anything more fundamental.

Mr. Crispin complains that when he studied calculus years ago, he "really did not get it." I have a book for him: *A Tour of the Calculus*, by yours truly (Pantheon).

Bernard Ecanow: Way to go!

"Israel—With Grandchildren"

TO THE EDITOR:

There are many things in Norman Podhoretz's often touching article, "Israel—With Grandchildren" [December 1995] I might respond to. In connection with the McDonald's "problem," to take one example, I can only say that as one who participated in a bitter and often ugly struggle in the early 60's to force Coca-Cola, in the teeth of Arab boycott threats, to allow an American to operate a bottling plant in Israel, I am grateful that, thanks to the peace process, a company like McDonald's no longer hesitates to extend its franchise to Israel. . . .

I would also like to comment on Mr. Podhoretz's statement that the "Hebrew University is not one of the best institutions of higher learning in the world." This is undoubtedly true, yet not altogether accurate: the university's mathematics department is considered one of the top departments in its field anywhere; its research in the natural sciences is nearly world-class; and, even at the risk of sounding self-serving, let me add that so is that of the Weizmann Institute. . . .

It is true that in the humanities our universities cannot compare with Harvard, Oxford, or the Sorbonne. Perhaps one day Israel will also produce an elite in these disciplines, but this will take time. After all, in 1840 neither American universities nor the country's intellectual life were on a par with those of England or France.

But all this is only on the periphery of Mr. Podhoretz's article. Its core, in my view, lies somewhere else. He seems to feel that Israel has betrayed its destiny and its Zionist ideals. . . . I am convinced he is wrong. Zionism was never conceived as a movement whose purpose was to build a fighting society, permanently at war with its neighbors. Its goal was, and must remain, to build a pluralistic, humane, and just society of and for the Jewish people. Yet throughout its existence Israel has not been able to do this. Our preoccupation, alas, has been of necessity with physical survival. Only if peace prevails can the country start to tackle the real problems it faces, first and foremost to mold a viable society and nation out of a population originating in 102 Diasporas. This can only be accomplished if a *modus vivendi* with our neighbors has emerged. Mr. Podhoretz is afraid that this is impossible; I am convinced that it is not only a necessity but that it is doable. Here, obviously, lies the crux of our differences.

Despite all the difficulties and dangers that still face us, there is no way out of our dilemma . . . except to pursue the peace process that is belittled and feared by Mr. Podhoretz and so many others. But no one entered into the peace process out of fear. . . . The opposite is true: those who initiated it were motivated by the stark realities of the region in which we live. Nor was the peace process begun because the country, its people, or its political class were tired of effort, austerity, and toil.

Mr. Podhoretz's vision of disaster would, I am convinced, turn out to be true if Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres had not had the courage and political wisdom to engage our neighbors in a process that hopefully will lead to mutual accommodation. Only because of their intellectual honesty and political realism can we face our grandchildren with any certainty that Israel's government and people have done everything in their power to advance the basic tenets of Zionism.

HANAN BAR-ON
Weizmann Institute
Rehovot, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Israel—With Grandchildren" I detect a certain mellowing in Norman Podhoretz. . . . Admittedly, the change is hardly spectacular, a nuance here and there, but still I sense that the mountain is be-

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ginning to move. This momentum might have been enhanced if Mr. Podhoretz had endeavored to expand his Israeli (and I presume Washington) circle of friends and acquaintances beyond the ideological Right—perhaps to include a few members of Israel's Labor party and perhaps (blasphemy of blasphemies) one or two Arab doves.

My! How the article would have changed. Mr. Podhoretz might then have said a tiny bit more about Israel's peace treaty with Jordan than the fact that Jordanian maps do not show Israel. I had thought the treaty was a momentous event, but then, unlike Mr. Podhoretz, I may be somewhat naive and idealistic. By the way, the Jordanians have already started to correct the mistakes of the past, including their maps. He might also have admitted (grudgingly, of course) that the performance of Yasir Arafat and the PLO so far has not been unencouraging, particularly in suppressing the militant, anti-Israel elements inside Gaza (I understand that even Israel's security forces agree that the PLO is doing a good job at this).

He might also have considered that Israel's burgeoning political, diplomatic, and economic ties with Morocco, Tunisia, Oman, and Qatar possess at least some significance for its survival and well-being. And he might have mentioned in passing that the last time Prime Minister Rabin visited the United Nations, he was almost mobbed by members clamoring to shake his hand—a far cry from the good old days of military occupation when an appearance at the UN by an Israeli minister was met with icy glares, to say nothing of walkouts. . . .

And then, of course, there is Jerusalem, and Mr. Podhoretz's conviction that a major conspiracy is at work which would allow for "shared sovereignty" in the city. Oh, Mr. Podhoretz, don't you see what a spectacularly wonderful idea this is! "Shared sovereignty" would make Jerusalem the natural candidate to become the political and administrative center of a Middle East Economic Union which would be the ultimate guarantor not only of Israel's survival but of its long-term prosperity and well-being.

Still, there is hope. Mr. Podhoretz is indeed making good progress. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his last sentence, in which he prays that his vision of disaster and war will ultimately be proved wrong. Allow me to let him in on a little secret: the Almighty has already answered his prayer!

ADEED DAWISHA
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

. . . From the title of Norman Podhoretz's article I expected a benign, sentimental account of a proud grandfather's visit to his grandchildren, . . . along with some discussion and analysis of the social and political views of his Israeli son-in-law and daughter and their contemporaries. . . . This would have been quite relevant, for, after all, they are citizens of Israel who vote, pay taxes, serve in the military, and endure the uncertainties of a country which has fought so many wars and has been under siege since its founding.

But I was astonished to find an article so critical of the present Israeli government and its leaders so soon after the death of a prime minister who, regardless of one's political leanings or disagreements with his policies, will be remembered as one of the greats in Israel's history. . . . From the introductory note it appears that the editors and Mr. Podhoretz were originally disturbed about publishing the article so soon after the assassination, and their immediate inclination was that it was out of date and perhaps unseemly and should therefore be suppressed. Their first instincts were correct, and it is a pity they were not followed; this article is not one that either Mr. Podhoretz or COMMENTARY should be proud of. . . .

Moreover, it is out of date. The peace process is a *fait accompli*: Madrid, Oslo, the handshakes in Washington are irreversible. To consider all this a prelude to the destruction of Israel is to carry pessimism and defeatism too far. . . . The status of the Golan Heights and Jerusalem is still to be negotiated. We, from our safe havens and suburbs in America, cannot make these decisions. Nor should we. . . .

ROBERT J. ROSENTHAL
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

. . . Intellectuals, very much like the fanatics who may ultimately kill, are tragically bound by ideas that roam around inside their heads. . . . Other people's ideas and aspirations are trivial. They do not live among real people who have to work hard, raise children, . . . and wish to belong to the modern, free world. Most people in Israel voted for Yitzhak Rabin because they wanted to try the peace route while coping with the dangers attending it. If there were someone who could reliably estimate the danger to Israel, it was Rabin, a soldier all his life and a Minister of Defense as well as Prime Minister when he died. No one was more qualified to chart Israel's future. This is precisely why his loss is one of such incredible magnitude. . . .

GIDEON BRAUDE
Ramot-Hashavim, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz . . . says that a prime objective of Zionism is the creation of a normal people. Many of the other Zionist objectives, including the establishment of a Jewish state and a land to which all Jews can come, . . . have largely been achieved. Yet the issue goes far deeper.

Let us first note that Israel is not a normal nation, nor are its people a normal people. Other nations do not recognize its capital, and many do not even recognize it as a state. Perhaps the most unifying aim of the nations (as in the UN) is their denunciation of Israel. Nothing is as universal as the call for peace—once Israel starts winning a war.

Moreover, the Israelis

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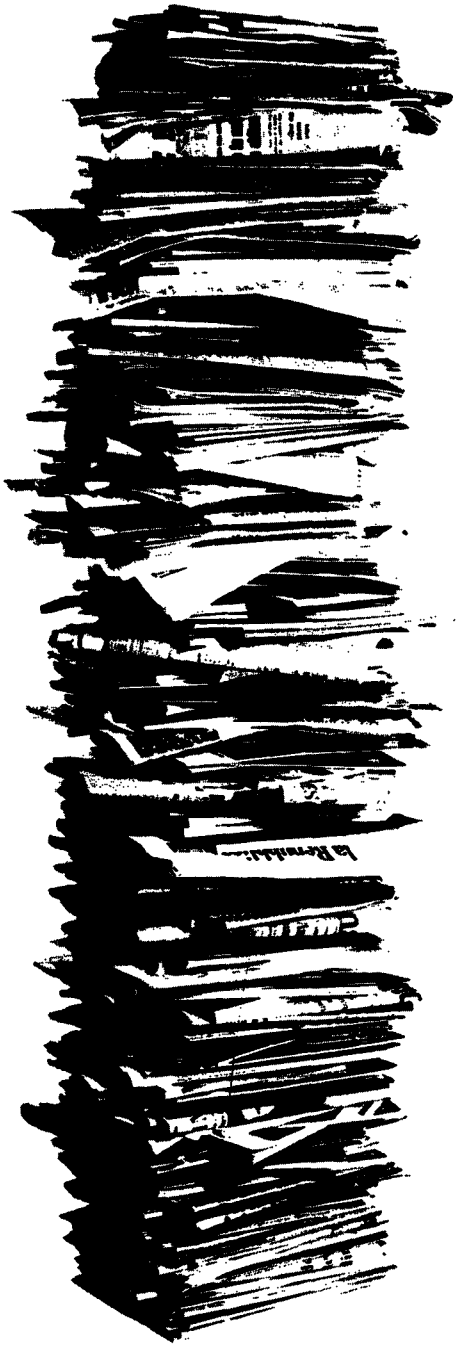

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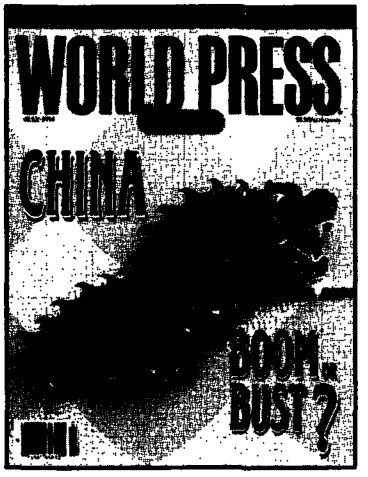

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do not behave as other peoples do. Does any other nation permit its citizens to cower in fear of bombs or gas without responding aggressively? Does any other people permit others to worship at holy shrines while preventing its own people from doing so? Does any other people abridge its own sovereignty, let alone its *raison d'être* (as a Jewish state)?

Jews have sought normalcy everywhere. . . . Yet even the idea of normalcy, of trying to be the same as all other peoples, seems never to have occurred to any other people. . . There is an alternative. Jews can be a people apart, one that can become a beacon to mankind. This is not a simple matter of religious observance, but of the living-out of Judaism's basic tenets. Judaism requires truth and justice. The truth is that peace has not been the issue in Israel; it has never been desired by the Arabs, and it is thwarted most when blackmail is paid to the aggressors. Justice is served by resisting aggression, never by accommodating evil. . . .

Many have said "Give peace a chance," as though Israel has ever tried anything else. What has never been considered, however, is to give principle a chance. A policy based on truth and justice may be anathema to the world, but it is the only one that can work for the Jews. . . .

Mr. Podhoretz is likely to disagree with the above. But if he can suggest an alternative approach, he should provide us with it. . . .

ALLEN WEINGARTEN
Morristown, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

As an American-born Israeli, I can appreciate Norman Podhoretz's political insights, both as a parent of five children whose grandparents still live in the "old country" and as a resident of the area now referred to as "Area C territory."

I congratulate COMMENTARY on its decision to publish Mr. Podhoretz's article, if only to permit your readers to gain an insight into the very real feelings of despair, held not only by Mr. Podhoretz but by many in Israel itself, on both sides of the Right-Left spectrum politically and living on both sides of the Green line. . . .

YISRAEL MEDAD
Shiloh, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

In my many years of reading COMMENTARY, I have never before been moved to tears by one of its articles. But Norman Podhoretz's "Israel—With Grandchildren" made me cry. This is partly because one of my sons is a medic in the Israel Defense Force (IDF), which terrifies me, but also because I am overwhelmed by the possibility that in my lifetime I may witness both the birth and the death of this country.

Mr. Podhoretz has touched on the most dangerous ills we are suffering, although he seems to hold the naive belief that the IDF is still what it used to be. I wish he were right, but, alas, with the advent of drugs, political correctness, and reversion to Diaspora mentality, this is no longer the case. The army may be technologically up to date, but the government's refusal to use it as it was designed to be used—i.e., to be the defender of Israel—has caused a loss of morale and decline in self-image in this sphere as well. I find it hard to believe that this has not affected Israel's image in the world, especially among the Arabs, who certainly seem to have discovered every one of our vulnerabilities, both military and spiritual.

I also find my left-wing friends increasingly willing to accept each surrender, each instance of appeasement, as it comes along. I do not know whether native Israelis are stupider than I am or simply more tolerant of the feeling of wool over the eyes. . . .

Having been so taken with Mr. Podhoretz's article, the only thing left for me is to castigate him a little: if Jews like him, who have developed so much clout in the intellectual and political sphere over the years, had realized ten or more years ago that their place was here, we might not be in this position. The excuse of the American-Jewish-Zionist intellectuals has always been that they were more useful in America, where they could influence the powerful U.S. government. . . . People like Mr. Podhoretz could have taken a place in the government or in influential intellectual circles, where they could have turned the establishment away from the disastrous road it is taking. But it is too late now.

If Norman Podhoretz thinks we wept by the rivers of Babylon the last time we remembered Zion, imagine how we are going to weep this time.

MARILYN MAGEN
Tel Aviv, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

I was struck by Norman Podhoretz's recounting of his recent conversations about the peace process with Israelis who are not ideological leftists. Sadly, I am not as lucky as he seems to have been. I too have spoken to many members of the Israeli establishment over the past few months, and I cannot seem to get a balanced conversation out of any of them, especially after the Rabin assassination. They seem to be participants in a "group think" that brooks no questioning.

Some examples: a few days after the assassination, I met with two Israelis who were studying in Boston for the year, both highly-placed in the Israeli government bureaucracy. . . . I tried to point out to them that it was inaccurate to allocate sole responsibility for the assassination to the opposition. Rabin himself had certainly contributed to the creation of a dangerous climate in which a significant portion of the population (those who disagreed with the government's peace program) felt belittled, abandoned, mocked, and derided and had, accordingly, become desperate.

These Israelis, with whom until then I had enjoyed a friendly personal relationship, turned on me with a vengeance that left me shaken: "It's exactly that type of thinking that

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is responsible for the murder," they exclaimed. "You're no better than the rest of them. We really understand democracy and the limits of free expression, and we will crush those people!"

Surprised at their harshness, but encouraged by their apparent interest in discussing the democratic process, I pointed out the special responsibility of a majority in a democracy not to trample the rights of the minority, in this case the nearly 50 percent of the country that expressed severe reservations about the pace and quality of the government's peace program. My Israeli friends responded, "We know how to run a democracy and when you win by one vote, you can set any policy you want!"

A week later, I had the opportunity to meet with a diplomat from the Israeli Foreign Ministry. I told him I thought that the fact Rabin had been called a Nazi and a murderer was overrated as the cause of the assassination. Israeli leaders had been called by both these epithets for years—Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon being two prime examples—and during the *intifada* the Left had routinely likened the methods employed by the Israeli occupation to those of the Nazis. Indeed, many educated Americans my age had called the President of the United States a murderer in 1967 and 1968 ("Hey, hey LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?"). Yet none of that name-calling had led to assassination. The difference, I maintained, was the divisive and desperate climate that had been fostered in large part by Rabin.

The diplomat's response was an emphatic, "Wherever do you get these ideas?" . . . We then ran into a colleague of his from the Foreign Ministry, and he said, "Come listen to what Josh is thinking," as though I were a visitor from another planet. I again explained this rather simple theory of joint responsibility. The second man then stared at me as though his brain had short-circuited. . . . He then said, "You mean that it was OK to shoot Rabin?" Another expert.

So I envy Mr. Podhoretz his relatively clear-thinking Israeli interlocutors, however few they may be. I wonder what kind of a democracy the Israelis I have been speaking to will develop. It is true that there are countries in the world with the word "democratic" in their name, but, sadly, it has usually been preceded by the word "people's."

JOSHUA W. KATZEN
Newton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

I read Norman Podhoretz's moving article with great interest, particularly because his account confirmed the same intense sensation of danger that I experienced during my recent, all-too-brief visit to Israel.

An Israeli friend has told me that the impact of Rabin's death was powerful but short-lived, and that the atmosphere is now much as it was before the assassination. She has promised that on her next visit to England she will bring me one of those T-shirts which I presumed would have vanished from the shops but are apparently still on sale: the one on which an Indian chief in full war bonnet sits together with Rabin and says, "Let me tell you about land for peace." . . .

I hope, like Mr. Podhoretz, that the views of the optimists will be reflected in events. But my own experience of living among Arabs does not point that way.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's article brought tears to my eyes. As one who was born in Israel (Palestine then) and who was there to witness the birth of the state, with all its joy and pain, I can only say that Norman Podhoretz's words echo my sadness, my helplessness, my anger, and, unfortunately, my resignation. I cannot for the life of me understand why Israel's current leaders have given orders for the nation to march to suicide. . . .

RACHEL NEWMAN
Miami Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

I have learned from Norman Podhoretz, agreed and disagreed with him many times over many years, but after reading "Israel—With Grandchildren," in which he writes so sensitively and lovingly about his daughter and grandchildren, I was also deeply touched. . . .

Like him, I worry about Israel, knowing the long reach of Islam. And like him, too, I hope that his predictions will prove to be wrong.

REUVEN BAR-LEVAV
Southfield, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

I have just read—with sadness for the content and admiration for its clarity—Norman Podhoretz's moving article. I could not agree with him more, and share his sense of foreboding. It is so evident that those in the Arab world who wish to destroy Israel—and that includes nearly all its neighbors in the Middle East—have not been neutralized but encouraged by the "land-for-peace" process.

ROBERT JASTROW
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

"Israel—With Grandchildren" is a jewel of an essay, and I wish everyone in the country would read it. . . . I think it is Norman Podhoretz's finest yet.

Atheist Wasp that I am, I have no right to be a Zionist, but I feel like one—yes, even a supporter of Likud. . . . I do not understand how so many Jews, of all people, could be so taken with the "peace process." If territory could buy peace, the Arabs would seem to have enough of it. How do the peace processors plan to stop the process before the Arabs squeeze them into the sea? . . .

WINIFRED SCOTT
New York City

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

My old friend Hanan Bar-On seems to have missed the humor in my little disquisition on McDonald's, and he also missed my acknowledgment of Israel's excellence in science and technology.

As to the peace process, I see no useful point in going over the same ground

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yet again. Mr. Bar-On, like Adeed Dawisha (though evidently without benefit of a special revelation from the Almighty), Robert J. Rosenthal, and Gideon Braude, believes that the peace process is working and has already begun to usher in a wonderful new era (of course they were writing before the recent horrible wave of bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv); I think—for reasons I spelled out in "Israel—With Grandchildren" and in several other articles that have appeared in these pages—that it will lead to war (and indeed in a certain sense it already has).

As I have said countless times before, I hope and pray that I am wrong, and all the more so when I read what Marilyn Magen says about the current condition of the IDF, about which I hope and pray that *she* is wrong—as wrong as I know she is in imagining (flattered though I am by such an idea) that things would be different today if only I had moved to Israel ten years ago.

I thank Allen Weingarten and Joshua W. Katzen for their interesting observations, with many of which I concur, and I am grateful to Yisrael Medad, Herb Greer, Rachel Newman, Reuven Bar-Levav, Robert Jastrow, and Winifred Scott for their wonderfully generous comments.

Stokowski/Rubinstein

TO THE EDITOR:

I write to express my appreciation for Terry Teachout's essay on Leopold Stokowski ["The Vulgar Virtuoso," October 1995]. Stokowski was a hero to me when I was a student at the William Penn Charter School in downtown Philadelphia, from 1919 (when I was ten years old) to 1926. I went regularly to Friday afternoon Philadelphia Orchestra concerts, until I graduated and left Philadelphia.

Mr. Teachout's fine essay reminded me of an unforgettable experience I had when Stokowski confronted his Friday afternoon audience with music by Edgar Varèse, which was greeted with fierce antagonism, many rising to shout their disapproval, and many departing from the hall. I was thrilled, not only by the music, but also by the excitement of defending its choice against tradition and against the tastes of most of the audience.

What troubles me in this recollection is the realization that audiences in recent decades are too intimidated to protest. I see nothing wrong with being bourgeois. But today's upper-middle-class audiences fear to behave like bourgeois, in sad submission to what is thought to be avant-garde.

In my distinctly nonprofessional judgment, Mr. Teachout has presented a fine portrait of Leopold Stokowski.

DAVID RIESMAN
Harvard University
Cambridge Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

After reading Terry Teachout's disturbing decanonization of Arthur Rubinstein ["Whatever Happened to Arthur Rubinstein?," February], I cannot help wondering if the severe limitations of recording technology have skewed his criteria for deciding who rises to posthumous stardom and who plummets to "obscurity." Ought we eschew "an artist's stage presence" and "personality," characteristics admittedly elusive on a recording, for a kind of technical flawlessness that is captured impressively on CD?

I would like to remind Mr. Teachout that a successful performance relies as much on visual elements as it does on aural ones. I am not talking about doing trapeze stunts on the piano bench or looking skyward, face contorted in spells of purported emotion. Such disingenuous histrionics do not constitute charisma or panache. And Rubinstein never resorted to such tricks, as Harvey Sachs confirms in his biography. I am talking about the ability of an artist, through presence and charm, to aid in music-making, in communication. Should musicians who "rely on [such] extramusical factors" be "doomed to posthumous obscurity"? Only if the listening public is to be populated solely by recluses like Glenn Gould, who prefer stereo sound to live performance.

The beauty of recording is its power to capture and preserve for future generations the sound of an artist today. But its failure lies in the tendency to promote one-dimensional . . . performances that are as much the creations of studio engineers as of artists. How many "live" recordings today are truly uncut, unedited takes from actual performances? I ask Mr. Teachout to assemble, say, ten versions of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto by ten prominent young violinists. Could he distinguish one from all the rest? Inevitably, he would find ten flawless performances, all virtuosic, dazzling—and utterly dull. . . .

Arthur Rubinstein's "individuality" lies somewhere in the vaults of memory. His records may be "all we have," but they only tell half the story. Mr. Teachout's insistence upon using them as the sole criterion for evaluating Rubinstein's greatness sets the wrong standard. . . .

SUDIP K. BOSE
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

As a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, I would like to comment on Terry Teachout's article. When 78-rpm records were being produced 50 to 70 years ago, one was able to hear more of the artist's intent. All nuances and rubati were "picked up." When we went to long-playing vinyl (LP's), the sound was cleaner, but there was less "information" received from the performer (technically, less transients, more compression, more electronic editing, etc.). And now, with the advent of the CD, a tremendous amount of information simply does not exist.

According to its inventor, the CD was designed for mid-level popular music and was meant to be an improved version of the audiocassette, but it was never considered capable of reproducing all the nu-

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ances of classical art-music. Thus, a memorable performance of Rubinstein playing, say, the Chopin Concerto No. 1, if recorded on CD, would not have the same effect on the listener as hearing him in concert.

In a relentless bid for immortality, our new breed of artist has sacrificed the nuanced, the ineffable, the spiritual, the indirect, in favor of the clear, the cleanly articulated, and the primary colors that the CD can pick up and which it demands from performers. But the artist whose aesthetic is akin to Rubinstein's will be lost along the way. Too bad.

MICHELE ZUKOVSKY
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I met Arthur Rubinstein on several occasions and would like to recall here one of the lighter moments in his public life. In 1974, while I was in Israel playing with the Netanya Chamber Orchestra, I was fortunate enough to attend a piano-trio performance in Tel Aviv's Mann auditorium. The house was packed as we waited for the performers to appear on stage. First came Isaac Stern, violinist, smiling. Then came tall, thin, and serious Paul Tortelier, cellist. Finally, Rubinstein appeared and the audience gave him a standing ovation.

The program was to begin with Schubert's much-played Trio Op. 99 in B-flat Major. The audience settled down and Rubinstein began playing the opening chords. The trouble was that Stern was surveying the balcony and Tortelier was still tuning his instrument, both unaware that their keyboard accompanist had already set the concert in motion.

After playing some measures, little Rubinstein stopped, put his hands on his hips, glared at his colleagues, and, in a demanding tone, said, "*Nu*?" It must have been fifteen minutes until the audience stopped roaring with laughter and applauding. . . .

ROBERT D. LEVINE
Woodside, New York

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I agree with nearly all of what Sudip K. Bose says. Of course records "only tell half the story" of any musician's work. But in a culture where listeners increasingly experience music less through live performance than mechanical reproduction, that half is by definition the more important half. And as far as posthumous renown goes, recordings are, quite simply, the only thing that really matters in the end; contemporary accounts, however plausible or vivid, pale next to the "conclusive" evidence, however problematic or illusory, of a sound recording. Whether or not this is a good thing is a different matter: the point is that, for better or worse, it is true, and will remain so.

Future generations of listeners will judge every major performer of the 20th century not by his reviews but by his recordings. Those performers who did not make records will be forgotten; those incapable of convincingly embodying their personalities in their recordings will also be forgotten.

I thank David Riesman, Michele Zukofsky, and Robert D. Levine for their interesting letters.

Memoirs

TO THE EDITOR:

Readers of Dorothea Straus's lovely essay, "The Americans" [March], might be interested in knowing that Suzanne Ravage Clausen's memoirs of her strange upbringing in New York and France have been published posthumously as *Growing Up Rootless* (Fithian Press, 1995). My own COMMENTARY article, "Grandfathers—A Memoir" [April 1993], which Mrs. Straus discusses so kindly, was reprinted with minor improvements in my book of essays, *My Life with President Kennedy* (University of Iowa Press, 1994).

CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN
University Park, Pennsylvania

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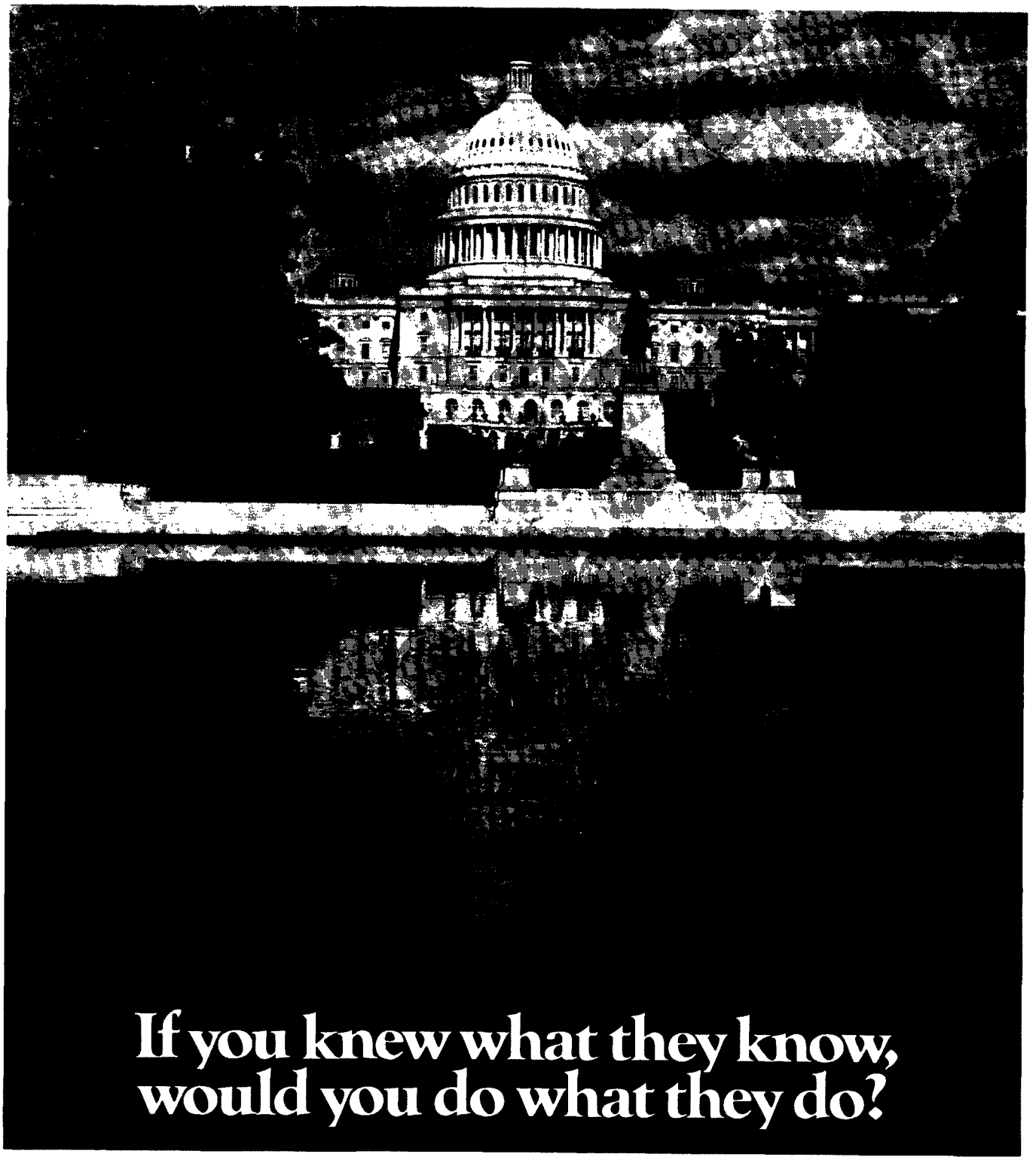

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Commentary
April 1996

American Power—A Guide for the Perplexed

Robert Kagan

In the six years following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, the United States has dispatched troops to foreign soil five times—during the Bush years to Panama, the Persian Gulf, and Somalia; in the Clinton years to Haiti and Bosnia. Each time the same questions have arisen: why should we be involved? What "vital national-security interests," if any, justify risking the lives of American soldiers? Where, exactly, *does* our national interest lie?

Much of the debate over these questions has been distorted by the usual partisan politics. Republicans have generally found interventions to be in the national interest when carried out by a Republican President but not when carried out by Bill Clinton; Democrats have generally taken the opposite view. But the discussion has also revealed something of a consensus about what in fact constitutes the national interest. What is odd is that under the terms of the consensus, almost every one of America's post-cold-war interventions fails to qualify.

Robert Kagan, *Alexander Hamilton Fellow at American University in Washington, D.C., is a contributing editor of the* Weekly Standard *and the author of the recently published* A Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua 1977-1990 *(Free Press). His articles in* Commentary *include "The Case for Global Activism" (September 1994) and "A Retreat From Power?" (July 1995).*

Michael Mandelbaum, who served as an adviser to candidate Clinton in 1992, has coined a new term to describe the kind of intervention undertaken in Haiti, Bosnia, and Somalia. In a recent, blistering critique of the Clinton administration in *Foreign Affairs*, he calls it "international social work."* Our "new foreign policy," Mandelbaum asserts, rather than focusing as it should on the "core" elements of the international community, has foolishly made forays into the "periphery." Rather than limiting itself to managing the relationships among states—the "usual subject" of foreign relations—the new policy concerns itself instead with "the social, political, and economic conditions within borders." Above all, rather than centering itself, like "traditional" foreign policy, on American interests, the new policy aims misguidedly to "promote American values."

Mandelbaum's article gives pithy expression to a view—the "realist" view—held by much of the foreign-policy community today and also, it would appear, by wide sectors of public opinion. Since the publication of his article, the term "international social work" has been snatched up by a broad range of critics who believe that under Clinton, and to some extent under George Bush before him, we have embarked on a new and dangerous path. But arguments similar to Mandelbaum's have also been a staple for years now

*"Foreign Policy as Social Work," January/February 1996.

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at the *National Interest*, the conservative foreign-policy quarterly published by Irving Kristol and edited by Owen Harries. And in the political arena, the distinctions Mandelbaum sets forth were raised hundreds of times by Republicans during the debate in Congress last year over Bosnia. Most shared Senator Trent Lott's opinion that "the United States should only participate militarily on the ground in places in which U.S. interests are clear and understandable," and in Bosnia most found no such "clear and understandable" interests at stake.

Nor is the realist view limited to conservatives and Republicans. As the debates over both Bosnia and Haiti made clear, even the Clinton administration and its supporters have accepted Mandelbaum's scheme by default. Anthony Lake, perhaps the only senior Clinton official to venture a broad theoretical explanation for the administration's policies, has had a hard time showing how its desire to do good in the world fits within any definition of the national interest. ("I think Mother Teresa and Ronald Reagan were both trying to do the same thing," he has said.) Although Clinton was able to send troops to Bosnia, his administration never quite succeeded in convincing a majority of Americans that doing so *was* in the national interest. Even many of the Democrats supporting intervention tended, like Senator Joseph Biden, to shy away from speaking of America's national interest, preferring instead to invoke its "moral interest."

Something is amiss here. It is easy enough to argue, as Mandelbaum and many others have done, that the Clinton administration, and only the Clinton administration, has taken the United States down a wrong path. But the forces shaping our foreign policy are larger and more powerful than Bill Clinton. The Bush administration also embarked on missions of what Mandelbaum now calls "international social work," first in Panama, then in Somalia. Nor is it certain that, had he been elected to a second term, George Bush could have avoided the use of American military power in Bosnia in some form. No, there is something about America's position in the post-cold-war era which seems to incline us to this kind of global involvement, and yet there is also something about our reigning political discourse which prevents our finding the language to comprehend and to justify it.

II

HOW DID we arrive at the perception that our national interest is something clear and calculable, involving only such tangible and measurable things as oil reserves and military bases, and excluding such intangibles as principles, ideas, or "American values"? As it happens, today's common definition is neither self-evident nor eternal nor even "traditional." If someone had asked Alexander Hamilton what the national interest was, he would have alluded to prosperity and security from foreign influence, but he would also have invoked the need to lift his young country into a place of honor among the world's great powers. Theodore Roosevelt would have declared it in America's national interest to foster the spread of Anglo-Saxon civilization throughout the world. Past American Presidents and statesmen would never have imagined that the national interest, a term which can encompass our nation's noblest aspirations, would come to possess such a narrow and limited meaning as it does now.

Our present understanding was in fact born a mere half-century ago, when, like today, a new international order had emerged requiring a new way of looking at America's role in the world. Foreign-policy realism grew amid and out of the violence and horror of the age of Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini. It came to fruition in the course of a world war that exposed the utter bankruptcy of earlier notions about the moral perfectibility of mankind and the possibility of permanent peace. In the rubble at war's end lay a shattered world view which since the late 19th century had placed hope in legal compacts, the harmony of interests, economic interdependence, universal education, the spread of liberal government, and many other such ideas.

The realists were aggressive insurgents against such foolish optimism and dreamy utopianism. Inspired in part by the "Christian-realist" theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, and in part by their reading of Hobbes and Machiavelli, they built a monument to a grimmer set of truths: man's nature was inherently sinful; a harmony of interests was unachievable in the temporal world; conflict was inevitable.

The bible of the realist school was Hans J. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1948). Nations would always pursue their own interests, Morgenthau declared, and these lay chiefly in the accumulation of power. Permanent interna-

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tional peace was therefore impossible, and reliance on a supranational authority—like the newly born United Nations—was misguided. The desire of some Americans for a retreat to isolation was equally fanciful, a product of the distinctly American delusion that somehow "the final curtain would fall and the game of power politics would no longer be played." The United States, like all other nations, had to give up this fantasy of escape, and instead engage seriously in endless competition with the world's other powers by maintaining its armed might and concentrating on the narrower pursuit of its "national interest."

Critics would accuse Morgenthau and others who followed him of proposing a cynical Machiavellianism as the guiding tenet of American foreign policy. In the early years of the cold war, a liberal anti-Communist like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. derided the "boys who have just discovered that politics involve power" and called them "immoral." The historian Frank Tannenbaum charged that the purveyors of "this dreadful doctrine" were "confessedly, nay gleefully, amoral" in their contempt for those "who believe that men may strive for peace among nations." From another quarter, left-leaning critics of America's conduct of the cold war in the Truman and Eisenhower years, and later in the era of Nixon and Kissinger, would attack realism's emphasis on *raison d'état* and the inescapable requirements of power politics as offering theoretical justification for the endless expansion of American imperialism.

IN TRUTH, the realists were neither strictly Machiavellian nor amoral. Their goal was amelioration, making a dismal and dangerous world better and safer by facing the unpleasant truths of international existence. Nor did they believe that the national interest could be defined as the limitless acquisition of power without regard to moral consequences. On the contrary, Morgenthau and others laid claim to an even higher morality than that of the "utopians" they disparaged. "The choice," Morgenthau famously asserted, was

> not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between one set of moral principles divorced from political reality, and another set of moral principles derived from political reality.

For the realists, the way to reconcile the realities of power politics with the necessary search for international peace and justice was through a balance of power. Just as an equilibrium served to keep competing interests in check *within* pluralist societies like the United States—as James Madison had prescribed in *The Federalist 10*—so it served a similar function on the international scene. "Some balance of power," Niebuhr argued, was "the basis of whatever justice is achieved in human relations." If such a balance were lacking, "mere rational or moral demands" would be worthless. Years later, Henry Kissinger, with Richard Nixon the premier realist statesman of his era, proclaimed the same logic: "If history teaches anything, it is that there can be no peace without equilibrium and no justice without restraint."

The history to which Kissinger referred was that of 19th-century Europe. In the wake of the Napoleonic wars, the "Concert" of powers created by Metternich, Castlereagh, and other European statesmen had established a remarkably durable peace, undermined only by the nationalist movements and liberal revolutions of mid-century. Later, the European system organized by Bismarck represented another act of conscious balancing; its unraveling, again the result of uncontrolled nationalism, laid the ground for World War I. In both cases, international equilibrium had been prized by leaders who had more to gain from peace than from war, but who recognized that the avoidance of conflict required constant exertion, military preparedness, subtle and flexible diplomacy, and, above all, respect for the balance of power itself.

Realism, therefore, provided no justification for the endless expansion of power, whether the power of Metternich's Austria and Bismarck's Germany or the power of mid-20th-century America. For the realists, the national interest demanded not national egoism but, to the contrary, an acceptance of limits and a high degree of self-restraint. For the balance of power to be preserved, Morgenthau argued, statesmen could not demand more in pursuit of their own goals than their counterparts in other countries could reasonably be expected to yield: they had to limit themselves to protecting only "vital" interests. In the nuclear era, the "age of total war," this was one of "the conditions for survival."

Finally, the realists argued that in every international system, one nation had to play a special role as balancer. At the end of World War II it was obvious that, by accident more than by design, the United States had been catapulted

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into the role once played by Bismarck and Castlereagh. America, Morgenthau observed, now held the position of "dominant power and, hence, foremost responsibility" in the new world order. To Niebuhr, America had to "find a way to use its great power responsibly," and thus help the world "find a way of avoiding complete anarchy."

III

IN EQUATING the national interest with a new international balance of power, the realists needed to determine where exactly America's "vital" interests lay. Their quasi-scientific calculations relied heavily on geopolitical theories that were enjoying a vogue in the 1940's.

In the infant field of international relations, the sociologist Nicholas J. Spykman had stimulated renewed interest in the writings of the late-19th-century American naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and of Mahan's British contemporary, Sir Halford MacKinder, the theorist of "land power." Updating Mahan, and replacing MacKinder's famous "Heartland Theory" with a "Rimland Theory," Spykman helped shape the thinking of realist strategists looking for ways to calculate vital interests.

The central geopolitical fact was that, much like England in an earlier era, America was an island power lying "off the coast" of the great Eurasian landmass. From this it followed that America's national interest began with the establishment and preservation of a predominant position in its own hemisphere. Since that predominance could be challenged only by an outside power, the national interest also included, next, the preservation of a balance of power in Eurasia (MacKinder's "Heartland"), where alone lay the resources and population levels which, if ever amalgamated, might overwhelm American might. To this "permanent interest" in maintaining a balance among the great powers of Europe, Morgenthau added a similar "permanent interest" in a balance in East Asia. In particular, Morgenthau declared it a continuing American concern to prevent "the domination of China by another nation"—i.e., the Soviet Union—lest this lead "to so great an accumulation of power as to threaten the security of the United States."

This, then, was the realist reading of America's vital interests, and—just as leftist critics complained—it did tend to support the main thrust of American foreign policy in the postwar era. Depicting the Soviet Union as the central menace to the balance of power, the realists insisted upon the need to maintain high levels of armaments and military preparedness, to keep troops in Western Europe, to provide aid to European economies, and to form the NATO alliance. In Asia, realist theory supported the reconstruction of and alliance with Japan and it would later support the intervention in Korea and even, with qualifications, in Vietnam.

But that is far from the whole story. For one thing, the realists were adamant that the United States not pursue goals outside the realm of vital geopolitical interests; they warned against entanglements on the periphery. And for another thing, they vehemently opposed letting foreign policy be shaped by American principles and moral concerns. Such pursuits threatened the balance of power—itself, for the realists, the incarnation of a prime moral principle—and therefore national survival. Disagreements with competitors over these "secondary" interests could lead to confrontation and nuclear war; and even if they did not, the pursuit of these broader goals could deplete resources and bankrupt the nation. Even a rich and heavily populated country like the United States, Morgenthau pointed out, could not possibly have enough money and armaments "to promote all desirable objectives with equal vigor." Like all nations, it had to allocate its "scarce resources as rationally as possible." It was, therefore, urgent to make use of "scientific analysis" so as to "prun[e] down national objectives to the measure of available resources in order to make their pursuit compatible with national survival."

Here lay the sticking point. For if, in general, the realists supported the aims of American policy in the cold war, in practice they were often troubled by the broad way both American politicians and the American public interpreted those aims. Under Truman, Eisenhower, and their successors, the realists turned out to be regular dissenters from American initiatives. As early as 1947, they characterized Truman's promise to "assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way" as inaugurating a disastrous holy crusade. The political commentator Walter Lippmann called the whole doctrine of containment a "strategic monstrosity," a limitless commitment certain to overtax finite resources and capabilities; the so-called "Lippmann gap" would become a central pivot in the argument about American "overextension" for the next

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four decades of the cold war. The diplomat George F. Kennan, perhaps the principal architect of containment in the late 1940's, was nevertheless appalled by the famous 1950 National Security Council planning document (NSC-68), which called for all-out ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union. Morgenthau condemned Truman's intervention in Korea as having been undertaken largely on "utopian grounds," in the name of a misguided commitment to "collective security." The realists also opposed the Eisenhower administration's rhetorical support for the "rollback" of Communism as another utopian dream, likely to lead to a third world war and possibly the annihilation of the human race.

THE HIGH-FLOWN rhetoric of early cold-war America, together with the fiery excesses of McCarthyism, confirmed the realists' deep suspicion that the United States was almost certainly lacking in the intellectual qualities and the discipline necessary to play its crucial historical role as the holder of the international balance of power. Although democrats themselves, the realists were highly suspicious of democracy, believing it deficient as a system for the making and carrying-out of sound foreign policy. Kennan compared American democracy to "one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as [a] room and a brain the size of a pin." Lippmann thought the important questions of national policy were too complex for an ignorant populace—the "pictures inside people's heads" formed by newspapers and radios simply did not "correspond with the world outside."

Of still greater concern to realists than American democracy was American idealism. While the United States might have engaged in power politics like other nations, it had always dressed up its policies in a kind of democratic messianism. This, said the realists, might have been acceptable in the secure 19th century, but it had become dangerous in the first half of the 20th, and could be positively fatal in the postwar nuclear era, when all revolutionary ideologies were enemies of the balance of power.

The realists' own model of desirable international behavior and wise statesmanship—the Concert of Europe—had been built by conservative aristocrats after the near-destruction of Europe by Napoleon Bonaparte, a revolutionary leader proclaiming universal truths and promising to liberate mankind. To some of them, indeed, the postwar world seemed to possess not one but two Napoleons, both proclaiming universal principles that hypocritically masked a naked drive for power. According to Morgenthau, American democratic values and Soviet Communist ideology were just different forms of the same "nationalistic universalism," a strange modern hybrid which claimed "for one nation and one state the right to impose its own valuations and standards of action upon all other nations." If, he warned, the balance of power were to be preserved—and this, remember, was the overwhelming strategic and moral imperative—both superpowers would have to practice self-control, give up their "dream of remaking the world in their own image," and rein in their "limitless aspirations for power." Concretely, this meant they would have to "draw back from their outlying positions and retreat into their respective spheres, each self-contained within its orbit."

In the early days of the cold war, when anti-Communism was widespread in America and when even supposed realists like Truman's Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, routinely made America's commitment to universal democracy a staple of his public rhetoric, it was not easy to argue against the intrusion of idealism into foreign policy. Yet during those years and throughout the decades that followed, as the fortunes of anti-Communist ideology waxed and waned, realists went on pointing to the folly of letting American principles guide American foreign policy. In 1964, Norman Graebner, then the preeminent realist historian, chastised the United States for having "warred on the Soviet bloc through appeals to the doctrine of self-determination" and for refusing "to recognize the Soviet sphere of influence in East Central Europe." A decade later, Henry Kissinger rehearsed the same arguments in response to conservative critics demanding a more aggressive moral offensive against the Soviet empire. How hard could the United States press, he asked, "without provoking the Soviet leadership into returning to practices in its foreign policy that increase international tensions"? The pursuit of American ideals had to be subordinated to national survival, and national survival depended on the maintenance of international equilibrium.

IV

THERE IS no gainsaying the realists' contributions to American foreign policy in the postwar era. They helped sweep away the dan-

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gerous myth that peace and American security could be achieved by trying to think the best of Stalin and his successors, or by relying on international agreements and organizations like the United Nations—or, alternatively, by a retreat into isolationism. Whatever their specific disagreements with American policy, their central ideas—that conflict among competing interests was inherent in the international system, that war could never be permanently eradicated, that the preservation of peace required active and sometimes forceful measures, that the exercise of power was an inescapable fact of human existence—promoted the aims of American diplomacy.

But the conduct and the conclusion of the cold war also revealed severe limitations in realism, both as a theory and as a practical guide to foreign policy. For the idealistic impulses of Americans, their tendency to want to "remake the world in their own image," played an important and perhaps even an essential role in bringing about the peaceful downfall of Communism. Despite its risks, the choice of ideological confrontation appears to have been a more successful mode of dealing with the Soviet Union than the realists' emphasis on coexistence and the acceptance of spheres of influence.

The surprising conclusion of the cold war also revealed other flaws in realism. As some observers had long noted, Morgenthau's seminal theoretical error was to make power and the acquisition of power the sole force that moved and explained the world.* Like the Marxists he disdained, Morgenthau sought to understand human behavior by a single cause. Power relationships were the unique substructure of international relations; everything else—ideology, culture, religion, economics—was superstructure. In particular, Morgenthau and many other realists took a dim view of ideology; they themselves might prefer one form of "universalistic nationalism" to another, but all forms were harmful to a proper calculation of the national interest.

Similarly with other motives for human behavior. The Greek historian Thucydides—much admired by the realists—wrote that men struggle not only for interest but also for honor. Morgenthau ignored the question of honor, and he also dismissed the related, troublesome issue of prestige, defining it away as "the reputation for power." But history is full of examples of nations fighting for honor in the face of certain defeat (e.g., Spain in the Spanish-American war) as it is of leaders seeking power chiefly in order to obtain honor (e.g., Kaiser Wilhelm II in his fateful naval competition with England in the early 20th century). Nor did Morgenthau's theory admit the possibility that nations might abjure the exercise of power out of guilt or shame, stimulated by a religious conscience or other values (as in, say, Great Britain's withdrawal from India). For Morgenthau, a society's beliefs could no more determine its exercise of power than for Marx they could determine its economic organization. Causality flowed in only one direction.

This flawed reasoning was compounded by another error. In their search for a means of defining the national interest, the realists favored variables that could be measured, even if only in some rough way. How else could "scientific analysis" be employed to "prun[e] down national objectives to the measure of available resources"? Since values and beliefs can never be measured, they were left out of the equation. Typical of the realist view was Kennan's insistence that the state, as the people's agent, had no business expressing or reacting to "moral impulses" in its calculation of the national interest. But if the state truly was the people's agent, it could not help reflecting their moral impulses. As the great French political philosopher Raymond Aron once wrote, the conduct of states toward one another is not determined by "relations of forces" alone: "ideas and emotions influence the decisions of the actors."

HAMPERED BY their one-dimensional view of the world, the realists missed the significance of American ideals as a factor in international affairs. During the cold war, Americans derived enormous strength and even a measure of consistency from their steady belief that freedom, democracy, capitalism, the rule of law, and the right to self-determination were the aspirations of all peoples everywhere, and that Communism and dictatorship were the enemies of those aspirations. It was, indeed, their "moral impulses" that enabled Americans to appreciate the need for maintaining a military presence in Europe, for resuscitating European and Asian economies, and for playing the international role which realists like Kennan deemed essential. All of these actions were, it is true, in America's geopolitical interest narrowly conceived, but to understand why that was so required an acute

*Morgenthau's disciples and the so-called "neorealists" modified his formula, not very successfully, to add greater complexity and nuance.

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sense of moral right and wrong. As Robert Osgood noted in 1953, in a sharp riposte to Morgenthau, idealism was an "indispensable spur to reason."

Nor did the dangerous "messianism" the realists feared ever materialize. In general, American policy-makers did not behave rashly, and whatever errors we committed in Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, and elsewhere could be attributed only in part to a crusading spirit. The really huge disasters which American realists warned against—national destruction, bankruptcy, nuclear holocaust—did not occur, even under that most "messianic" of Presidents, Ronald Reagan. America, it turned out, could pursue its idealistic mission in a fairly prudent way, without failing in its role as international balancer, without frightening the Soviet Union into a catastrophic misstep, and without blowing up the whole world in an effort to remake it.

Finally, the realists' tendency to view the two competing ideologies as equally invalid claims to universal truth, each canceling the other out, proved to be another important analytical error. The ideals championed by the Soviet Union simply could not compete with those championed by the United States, either in a material sense—producing the goods—or in a spiritual sense—responding effectively to human yearnings.

Over time, this imbalance in the ideological sphere manifested itself all around the world. It attracted to America's orbit not only the most powerful industrial nations but others of lesser stature on every continent. It eroded the legitimacy of Soviet rule in its East European empire, encouraged criticism of Communist tyranny within the Soviet Union itself, and, eventually, fostered self-doubt even among the Soviet supreme leadership. If there was a degree of hypocrisy and national arrogance in America's constant equation of the world's interests with its own, the strength of the claim also derived in large measure from the fact that so much of the world came to agree with it.

V

BUT NOT, apparently, the realists. Long after Morgenthau passed from the scene (he died in 1980), others took up the cudgels of the realist creed, right up to and beyond the great triumphs of American cold-war policy in the late 1980's. Indeed, it is a curious fact that at the very moment the Soviet Union was trying desperately to find a way to survive in a world increasingly shaped by American economic, political, and cultural values, a leading realist historian seized the occasion to declare that *America* was in a state of "relative" decline. The United States, warned Paul Kennedy in his best-selling book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), had to face "the awkward and enduring fact that the sum total of [its] global interests and obligations [had become] far larger than the country's power to defend them all simultaneously."

At the core of Kennedy's argument were the historical laws of international equilibrium. For a nation which had reached the global preeminence of cold-war America, he wrote, the "historical precedents [were] not encouraging." The bigger the empire, the more it had to protect, and the more likely it was to invite challenges from other great powers jealous or fearful of its predominance. In the circumstances, for which Kennedy coined the term "imperial overstretch," it might not be a "bad thing" for the United States to reduce its overseas commitments and become one of several great powers in a multipolar system—in short, to "prune" its national objectives.

The myth of American decline propagated by Kennedy (and others)—rudely exploded by world events just as it was reaching the crest of its popularity—rested on an amazingly inaccurate judgment. America's "relative" economic decline in the mid-1980's, after all, was due almost entirely to the great economic success enjoyed by its allies in Europe and Japan. According to the declinists, the growing strength of these allies had to be counted against American power as much as against Soviet power. This was bizarre reasoning, ignoring everything in international relations but mere economic indices. At the beginning of the cold war, America's huge share of the world's industrial product had reflected only the desperate poverty and weakness of its most important allies in the global strategic and ideological struggle. Forty years later, the United States, with a smaller share of the global economy, had become the leader of a vastly more powerful coalition of like-minded nations—almost all of whom voluntarily accepted and even counted on its leadership.

Much of the reasoning behind Kennedy's theory of imperial overstretch came from an inability to understand that the style of American hegemony, which had been shaped to conform uneasily to American values and principles, had no

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ready historical precedent. The United States, for all its great power and global reach, was not an empire like others—for the simple reason, as Joseph S. Nye, Jr. pointed out, that "America's overseas commitments [did] not involve the occupation and control of conquered territories." Some nations under the immense influence of American power might not feel the difference between American imperialism and genuine imperialism; some, especially in the Western hemisphere, may have been as helpless to resist American power as any colony. But most knew the difference between an empire and a voluntary alliance led by a powerful hegemon. The global economic system of which the United States was the center, combined with the pervasive influence of American ideals and culture, allowed us to wield influence without coercion. Other peoples generally discovered that it was better to join this world order than to fight it.

THE UNIQUE style of American hegemony at the end of the cold war led to a situation that ought to have been impossible according to any theory of international equilibrium. In the words of one leading neorealist, Kenneth N. Waltz, the "excessive strength" of one power should "prompt other states to increase their arms and pool their efforts against the dominant state." But when the Soviet empire collapsed and the United States was left as the sole remaining superpower, the normal and predictable response of the world's other great nations—to pull together in a coalition to check American power—did not happen. The reaction of America's European and Asian allies was not to fear or resist the emergence of this new giant. Their fear, rather, was that the United States would *withdraw* from its leadership role and unburden itself of responsibilities for preserving the world order it had created and from which they had so greatly benefited.

Even Russia, America's mortal enemy in the cold war, came to understand that American hegemony, while harmful to Russian egos, might not be at odds with fundamental Russian interests. This is a critical point often overlooked in the historical debate over the causes of the Soviet empire's collapse. Although Mikhail Gorbachev and his reform-minded associates had many reasons to seek a reordering of their society and a reprieve from the costly competition with the West, beneath all their calculations lay a fundamental assumption: they knew that what the United States wanted from them was not incompatible with the survival of the Russian state, or even with its prosperity and well-being. Put bluntly, they knew it was safe to surrender; and, as Germany and Japan could attest, it might even be lucrative. If American military and economic power had helped force the Soviets to a moment of painful decision, American principles made the choice for reform and integration into the American world order a fairly easy one.

VI

THE END of the cold war created an intellectual crisis for realism, and the crisis manifested itself both in theory and in practice. While the Soviet empire was collapsing, some went so far as to recommend propping it up to preserve the hallowed balance of power. Thus, John Mearsheimer, in a 1990 article, "Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War," recommended that the United States "do what it can to avert" a complete Soviet withdrawal from Europe; for without the stable balance of power provided by both superpowers, Mearsheimer asked, "what will keep the peace in the future?" Such thinking was not confined to the academic world. The Bush administration's fear of the break-up of the Soviet Union was based on a similar concern for European stability, as was its preference for Gorbachev over Yeltsin.

When the Soviet empire finally did collapse, most realists resisted the notion that we had entered a unipolar world. As if Paul Kennedy's thesis had suffered no damage at all, they continued to warn of America's declining position and to insist that the proper aim of American policy should be to manage its transition to a lesser status as a first among equals. The clearest statement of this idea was by Henry Kissinger, who in his 1994 treatise, *Diplomacy*, wrote that the world was fast becoming "more like the European state system of the 18th and 19th centuries," containing "at least six major powers—the United States, Europe, China, Japan, Russia, and probably India."

Two years later, the idea of treating Europe as if it were a single power seems almost as, well, unrealistic as listing India in the same group of major powers as the United States. Still, this unwillingness to come to grips with the fact of American global hegemony was, at the time, understandable, for what was at stake was nothing less than the very definition of the national in-

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terest which realists had spent 50 years trying to fix in the American mind. The alarm of the realists was also understandable: in a world without a competing superpower, without an ideological rival, and without the dire threat of nuclear holocaust, the pursuit of American ideals had become safer than ever before. In such a world, what would restrain the American tendency toward idealistic exuberance?

So it came about that, just as "decline" had been the key word for realists in the late 1980's, the key word after the Soviet Union's collapse became "temptation." As Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson wrote in 1992, America's intervention in the Persian Gulf, and before that in Panama, were examples of a new "imperial temptation," made possible by the post-cold-war lack of obstacles to the exercise of American power.

Not all realists have agreed with Tucker and Hendrickson that the Gulf war was unnecessary to defend America's national interest. But they have certainly said this about Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. The problem, in their judgment, may not be the cost (so far) of these actions in terms of national resources; nor is it that undertaking interventions of this nature poses a danger to our national survival. Rather, at the heart of realist thought today is a hostility to any foreign policy which seeks to foster American ideals abroad—*whether it is safe to do so or not*. The pursuit of these ideals they dismiss as mere social work.

THIS IS where we came in. But perhaps the first thing to be said about today's realists is that, their appeals to tradition notwithstanding, there is a big difference between their position and that of the realists of 50 years ago. That difference is rooted in historical circumstances. In a bipolar world, espousing a realist definition of the national interest meant accepting the need for constant international engagement and constant preparedness for war. Even today, if the world were *genuinely* multipolar—with six major powers of relatively equal strength competing for preeminence—the older conception of the national interest would still require American vigilance on the international stage. But in the world as it actually is, with a single, predominant superpower and several much weaker powers, the realist position logically impels the nation toward minimalism, if not toward isolationism.

Indeed, the greater our power in the world, the more we would seem required, by realist definitions, to withdraw from active involvement. Or, to put it another, paradoxical way, the greater our power, the smaller our national interest. The Western hemisphere, after all, seems fairly secure these days; and the danger that a single power will come to dominate the Eurasian World Island and then cast its greedy eyes on the New World is smaller now than at any time in this century. In such a world, those "vital national-security interests" which many Congressmen insist can alone justify the loss of a single American life would seem hard to come by, while excuses for indifference or disengagement are plentiful.

If there is a "temptation" abroad in the land today, this is it. Whatever the inadequacies of early cold-war realism, its goal had been to find the place where the pursuit of principles intersected with the realities of international power politics. Given those realities, Reinhold Niebuhr, for one, hoped that America would "accept its full share of responsibility" for solving the world problem. Today, with the acquisition of unparalleled global influence, one might argue that our share of responsibility for the "world problem" has not shrunk but grown. Yet the only people willing to assert this are not today's realists but a shrinking camp of internationalists with nothing but airy "humanitarianism" on their side.

VII

"A NATION'S first duty is within its borders," Theodore Roosevelt once declared, but, he went on to say, "it is not thereby absolved from facing its duties in the world as a whole; and if it refuses to do so, it merely forfeits its right to struggle for a place among the people that shape the destiny of mankind." Embedded in that declaration is the idea that the American people *should* take a hand in shaping mankind's destiny, that playing such a role accords honor, and that the right to such honor must be earned. It is a conception of the national interest entirely alien to today's constricted usage, which gives us nothing to aspire to beyond our material needs.

What, then, ought we do? Any serious understanding of the national interest in our time must begin with the recognition that the world is not as it was in the 19th century or during the cold war. Through the exercise of its material power and the power of its ideals, the United States has achieved a combination of national security and international mastery unknown since the days of

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Rome's dominance of the Mediterranean world. Today the international system is built not on a balance of power, but on American hegemony.

This has brought distinct benefits. In 19th-century Europe, the great powers jostled not only for power but also for prestige, and international jealousies were as much the cause of war as were the disputes over strategic ground. Today even potential American rivals like China, Russia, Japan, or Germany may aspire to greater influence in the world, but they do not yet dream of challenging the United States for the role of international hegemon. With the international hierarchy so firmly settled and widely agreed upon, crises like that in Bosnia do not provide occasions, as in the past, for competition among claimants to leadership. Indeed, the acceptance of the American-led order by most of America's potential challengers continues to be a central element in the preservation of peace.

The prolongation of this beneficial state of affairs as far into the future as possible would seem to be the best definition of America's national interest in the present era. One need entertain no utopian notions that the world order can be made permanent, that conflict has been eradicated, or that the future holds only peace and prosperity. The realists' central insights into the competitive and conflictual nature of mankind remain true; nor should we forget the truism that all great powers must some day fall. Indeed, the task of realism should be to warn us that the present, happy state of affairs is extremely fragile: we live in an interwar period. But how long that period will last, and what quality of international life can be achieved in the interim, are matters which Americans hold it in their power to influence.

IF THE national interest consists in the preservation of American preeminence, then the same general approach to foreign policy that brought us to our international pinnacle ought to be applied to keeping us there. That means maintaining American military superiority, not only to deter aggression, but also to discourage other great powers from trying to achieve parity with us. (This was the recommendation, unfortunately rejected, of the Pentagon's best policy planners during the Bush administration.) The predictability of American superiority has a calming effect on the international environment, inducing other powers to focus their energies and resources elsewhere. Failure to maintain that superiority will eventually encourage others, even those who do not yet have such ambitions, to challenge American hegemony, and will swiftly bring us back to the more dangerous world we have just departed.

Military strength alone will not avail, however, if we do not use it actively to maintain a world order which both supports and rests upon American hegemony. This requires a sharp departure from the narrow definition of national interests bequeathed to us by the realists. Their strategy has always been defensive and reactive. Once having identified the areas of its "vital interests," the United States was supposed to "draw back," as Morgenthau put it, from its "outlying positions," and be "self-contained within its orbit." But in today's unipolar world, even more than during the cold war, that kind of passivity only creates a vacuum begging to be filled, and passes the initiative to those who oppose our preferred international order. Since today's benevolent circumstances are the unique product of our hegemonic influence, any lessening of that influence will allow others to play a much larger part than they do now in shaping the world to suit *their* needs. The price of American hegemony is that just as it was actively obtained, it must be actively maintained.

Realists and their colleagues on both the Left and the Right of the political spectrum cry that the goal of preserving American preeminence is impossible, that even if it does not do so in the short run, in the end it will overtax American capabilities and lead to national bankruptcy. That is what they said during the cold war, too, when idealists like Ronald Reagan dreamed of winning the struggle against Communism. The fact is, however, that it will probably be cheaper to maintain the present order than it was to create it. In the 1980's, when Paul Kennedy warned of imperial overstretch, American annual defense spending ran a bit short of the 7.5 percent of Gross National Product (GNP) he believed necessary to meet American commitments. Today, with the great challenge of the Soviet Union sharply diminished, defense spending is at about 3 percent of (GNP). The American share of the global economy, meanwhile, has remained steady or has risen, and some of America's allies have seen a decline in their fortunes.

Realists these days also cling to what they call a "public-opinion" deficit—as if public opinion were itself an exhaustible resource that dwindled with every deployment of force overseas. But

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they cannot have things both ways. For the realists of Morgenthau's, Lippmann's, and Kennan's day, the American public was an excitable mob whose idealistic exuberance needed constant restraint; today, their intellectual progeny depict the public as an intractable obstacle to the use of force overseas. The truth is that the public is neither. Over the past 50 years it has proved stubbornly devoted to American ideals and their spread abroad, while prudent enough to avoid self-destruction in the cause of ideological crusades.

THE SPECIAL characteristic of today's unipolar system is that challenges to the order upheld by American hegemony invariably become challenges to American hegemony itself. When the world's preeminent state proclaims its commitment to certain principles of international behavior—against genocide, against aggression, against the widespread violation of individual rights and freedoms—then every time these norms are flouted, the world looks to the United States to see how it will respond. The United States, of course, need not and cannot respond to every such challenge. But that does not mean, when it fails to respond, that its inaction is without cost. When the hegemonic power does not react to violations of the principles it is widely known to espouse, a doubt is raised about its willingness or ability to preserve not only those principles but also its hegemony.

This, in a nutshell, is what was at risk in Bosnia, where America's will to play the part of leader among its most important allies fell under suspicion, both at home and abroad. Had the Bush administration grasped the continuity between American's moral concerns in Bosnia and its national interest, we might have been able to nip the Bosnian crisis in the bud. In particular, with the enormous credibility earned in the Gulf war, President Bush might have been able to put a stop to Slobodan Milosevic's ambitions with a well-timed threat. But because the eminently realist Bush administration placed Bosnia outside the sphere of "vital" American interests—what threat, after all, did it pose to the World Island?—the problem has now required the deployment of thousands of troops on the ground in an operation that even its proponents are uncomfortable with and defensive about.

The same could be said of American interventions in Panama, in Haiti, and perhaps even in the Gulf. The passive focus on "vital" interests allowed American leaders to ignore troubling developments which threatened the national interest more broadly and truly conceived. Local leaders were given reason to think that the United States did not consider its interests threatened by their behavior, only to discover otherwise when what had been considered tolerable ultimately proved intolerable. In each case, early warnings by an American government with an appropriate understanding of the national interest might have made unnecessary the later interventions with their messy consequences.

These are the errors we have stumbled into as a result of believing that the national interest can be measured in quasi-scientific fashion, that areas of interest can be located, and other areas excluded, by purely geopolitical determinations. For all our justifiable concerns about our economic competitiveness, our military capabilities, and our moral fiber, our biggest problem today may be one of understanding. We remain imprisoned by a conception of the national interest inherited from another era, one that, despite its virtues, was flawed at its inception and flawed in its application to the cold war, and is even more inappropriate to the present era.

No wonder we seem unaware of the special role that we have been given by a combination of historical circumstance and our own exertions. While the rest of the world remains impressed by our strength, we deem ourselves weak. At a time when we should be celebrating our good fortune, we incline toward pessimism. With our fate, and the world's fate, in our hands to a greater extent than ever before, we have grown careless of our responsibilities and heedless of the dangers of failure.

It is past time for Americans to start considering again the part they wish to play in trying to establish a more peaceful and just world order. A good way to begin might be to recall the part they have already played.

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Shakespeare, Shylock, and the Jews

William Meyers

I FIRST MET Dr. Roderigo Lopez in a footnote. There is a passage in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (Act IV, Scene 1) where Gratiano says to Shylock,

> Thy currish spirit
> Govern'd a wolf, who, hanged for human slaughter,
> Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
> And . . .
> Infused itself in thee.

Here, the New Penguin edition of the play has a footnote that reads, "This is argued as a reference to the execution of Dr. Lopez (*lupus*-wolf)." In the uncertain orthography of the 16th century, Lopez's name was frequently spelled "Lopus," and easily punned with the Latin for wolf; wolves and dogs were actually hanged for attacks on humans and domestic animals.

Dr. Lopez has been found mostly in footnotes since June 7, 1594, when he was carried on hurdles from Westminster to Tyburn Hill, the site of the gallows in Elizabethan London. Lopez, the Queen's physician, had been convicted of high treason for attempting to poison her. William Camden, a contemporary historian, tells us that at Tyburn, "Lopez affirm[ed] that he loved the Queen as he loved Jesus Christ, which from a man of the Jewish profession was heard not without laughter." The diarist John Stow noted that Lopez and the two others convicted with him were then "hanged, cut downe alive, holden down by strength of men, dismembered, bowelled, headed, and quartered, there [*sic*] quarters set on the gates of the citie."

Although Lopez is no one's idea of an important historical personage, in the last century or so he has occasioned articles by such prominent Anglo-Jewish historians as Sydney Lee, Lucien Wolf, and Cecil Roth. Faye Kellerman, the popular mystery writer, published an improbable historical romance, *The Quality of Mercy*, based on his case. The English author Pamela Melnikoff wrote a similarly fabulous novel for children, *Plots and Players: The Lopez Conspiracy*. During Edward I. Koch's tenure as mayor of New York, there was a much-publicized production of *The Merchant of Venice* which got him involved in a controversy about Lopez in the letters' section of the *New York Times*. The doctor has three entries in the index of John Gross's *Shylock: Four Hundred Years in the Life of a Legend* (1993).* And now there is discussion of Lopez in James Shapiro's well-received *Shakespeare and the Jews*.† A feature article about the book in the *Times* included a photograph of a

WILLIAM MEYERS, *here making his first appearance in* COMMENTARY, *has had plays produced Off Broadway and elsewhere. His new play,* Dr. Lopez, *is based in part on material in this article.*

*See Robert Alter's "Who Is Shylock?" in the July 1993 COMMENTARY—ED.

†Columbia University Press, 320 pp., $29.50.

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1627 woodcut of Lopez engaged in his alleged conspiracy.

JEWS WERE expelled from England in 1290 and not readmitted until 1656, although we now know there was a community of 80 to 100 Marranos—crypto-Jews living as Christians—in London during Elizabeth's reign. *Shakespeare and the Jews* gives us a feel for the culture they found themselves trying to pass in. Shapiro draws heavily on diaries, pamphlets, legal documents, and other nonliterary sources to illustrate his thesis: the "projection of English fantasies onto Jews—or the simulacra of Jews," as a reviewer of his book in the *New Republic* put it.

This was a century of social and psychological upheaval for the English. Successive royal decrees had transformed them from Catholics to Protestants to Catholics to Protestants; the revival of interest in their own history reminded them they were the product of the melding of several peoples; the success of Tudor policies strengthened their position in the world, while shifting power among classes at home. To sort out who they were to themselves, Shapiro argues, the English "constructed" a figure of the Jew, over against which they contrasted a figure of the Englishman.

Certain cultural constructs take on the force of myth and become indestructible; they are proof against reality. There are no vampires in America, and yet everyone in the country knows what vampires look like, knows they drink human blood, wear capes, sleep in coffins, can be warded off with garlic or by being confronted with a crucifix, and can be killed only with a wooden stake through the heart (some say a silver bullet will do). Children are introduced to vampire lore as soon as they are exposed to the Count on *Sesame Street*. At school they may read the classic Bram Stoker text, *Dracula*, and then be reminded of it again in a college course on 20th-century poetry when they read about the bats who "crawled head downward down a blackened wall" in the concluding section of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. There are innumerable novels, including most recently the series by Anne Rice, and enough movie versions to occasion cinema retrospectives. Although we are usually meant to feel abhorrence, vampires can also be made figures of fun in cartoons or by stand-up comedians doing their *shticks*. Some representations are actually philo-vampiric and try to help us see things from their point of view. (They can't help sinking in their fangs; society is to blame.)

So, *mutatis mutandis*, with the Jews. In traditional Christian societies, what gave the figure of the Jew its potency, made it ineradicable, was that he was more than just a commercial or social or even religious competitor: with these there might have been reconciliation. The Jew was a numinous figure, freighted more like the image of the vampire than some mere social stereotype such as one might have of a hillbilly, a spic, a bohunk, or a nerd. Unlike you and me, the Jew was also immortal, if not quasi-supernatural, defined by his evil—deicide—for all time, or at least until the end of days. As the scholar Hyam Maccoby has written, "Many Christians came to believe Jews had cloven feet and a tail, and that they suffered from an innate bad smell and from diseases of the blood, for which they sought remedies in vampirism[!]." The hook nose and funny accent were just details.

During the centuries when they were officially expelled from England, the image of the Jew was maintained there not just by the teachings of the Church but in stained-glass representations of the archetypal Jew, Judas, and in cathedral carvings depicting the Synagogue vanquished by the Church. Ballads kept alive the memory of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, a lad whom Jews were accused of having killed for ritual purposes in 1255, and the story was then recycled by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*.

One of the most accessible modes of transmission was the miracle and mystery plays performed in the nooks of churches and in public squares at regular times during the year. The title character of *The Conuersyon of Ser Jonathas the Jewe by Myracle of the Blyssed Sacrament* stabs a stolen host, which then bleeds and overcomes him. The figure of Jonathas is at once outrageously blasphemous and enormously funny. (Interestingly, this particular play has a subplot featuring a doctor.) As in all such plays of the period, the Jew was played with a bottle nose and a red fright wig.

These dramatic conventions reached their apotheosis in Barabas, the Jew in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1592). The play hardly has a coherent plot, being driven by the manic energy Marlowe pours into Barabas's wickedness. Along his way, Barabas poisons a whole nunnery, including his own daughter who has taken refuge there after he kills both her suitors. Marlowe has such a good time with Barabas's homicidal enthusiasms that not until near the end of the play does he remember that such evil must be punished, and devise an appropriate end for his villain. Yet Barabas dies unrepentant, crying "I would have confusion of you all,/Damn'd Christian dogs,.../Die,

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life! fly, soul! tongue, curse thy fill and die!" It is Barabas who utters the phrase, "Infinite riches in a little room," the only line Shakespeare ever quoted from a contemporary in one of his own plays, a line which fascinated Elizabethans poised between a medieval society where wealth was based on land and a capitalist one in which wealth could be condensed into coins, gems, and instruments of debt.

Marlowe in many ways resembles the 20th-century English playwright, Joe Orton: a quick-blooming talent, a mordant appreciation of wickedness, insight that expresses itself better in the crystalline phrase than in the well-developed philosophy, a defiant homosexuality, a reckless engagement with violence. Both men died young and brutally. Unlike Shakespeare, whom no one would consider an autobiographical playwright, Marlowe always put himself on stage. He figured in the characterizations of Tamburlaine (*Tamburlaine the Great*), Faustus (*Dr. Faustus*), certainly Edward (*Edward II*), and, I believe, Barabas. Why? Because figuring himself as a Jew allowed Marlowe to indulge in his two great fantasies, unlimited wealth and unlimited mayhem.

Enough of his audience enjoyed the spectacle of these same fantasies for the play to become an enormous success when it opened in 1592. Although the theaters were closed soon afterward because of an outbreak of the plague, Ned Allen, the great actor who created the title role, took the company on a tour of the countryside, and brought the play triumphantly back to London in 1594 in time for Dr. Lopez's trial. *The Jew of Malta* became the biggest theatrical hit until that time, and fed the anti-Jewish hysteria that prompted the mob to laugh so heartily at Lopez on the gallows.

LOPEZ AND Marlowe also had this in common: they both served as intelligencers for Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's Secretary of State. Marlowe had been recruited out of Cambridge where he was a scholarship student in divinity, and sent (probably) to the Jesuit seminary in Rheims to spy on English Catholics studying in France. When Lopez began *his* service is not known but, like many Marranos, he was deeply involved in secret diplomatic intrigues. In an era when news traveled slowly and uncertainly, the commercial and family ties maintained by the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal throughout Europe and the Mediterranean provided valuable conduits for information. The precariousness of their situations everywhere made it advantageous for them to insinuate themselves into positions with proximity to power. And it could be made to pay.

Lopez's father-in-law, Dunstan Añes, was Purveyor and Merchant for the Queen's Majestie's Grocery. He was the first to bring Elizabeth the news that the Spanish Armada had actually set sail on its crusade against Protestant England. Another relation through marriage was Alvaro Mendez, a fascinating man who left Portugal in his youth, made a fortune in the Indian diamond mines, was a financial adviser to Catherine de Médicis, and finally an important vizier to the Sultan in Constantinople. He so impressed Elizabeth when they met that she made him her point man in the Sublime Porte, often relying on him rather than her official ambassador when delicate work was at hand.

As for Lopez himself, he was intimately involved in the affairs of Don Antonio, the bastard pretender to the Portuguese throne who ended up in England where he tried to raise support for his cause. Lopez was his translator, his gofer, and, when all Antonio's projects failed, his creditor. The Spanish tried to get Lopez to betray him.

"One thing is needful: win the Queen," wrote Sir Francis Bacon. There were two main factions that vied for Elizabeth's attention. One was noble, martial, High Church, land-poor, and determinedly anti-Spanish. The Earl of Leicester, and then his ward, the Earl of Essex, headed this party. They loved entertainment, including the theater, and both Marlowe and Shakespeare were allied with them. The other faction was not so noble, not so warlike, not so High Church, comfortable with commercial interests, pragmatic about Spain, sober and industrious. Lord Burghley, who inherited the portfolio of espionage operations after the death of Sir Frances Walsingham, headed *this* party. Dr. Lopez had entry to both groups, but after the failure of Don Antonio's project, for which Essex was in large measure responsible, he mostly associated with Burghley's interests.

Throughout her reign, the Queen made it a practice to have contradictory schemes under way in most policy areas so as always to have options available. One such may have been an initiative of Walsingham's to sound out Philip, the king of Spain, on the possibilities of a comprehensive peace. Elizabeth was an inspired leader of her people in times of danger, but she was no war-lover. So she probably would have supported Walsingham in his circuitous venture to see if there was some way Philip could be settled with, and in this venture her royal physician, Dr. Roderigo Lopez,

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would have been instrumental. But whether the Queen was supportive or not, Burghley, possibly because he knew Philip would never make an accord with an ever more powerful England, provided little supervision of this operation. He certainly knew of it, though, and both he and the Queen consented at least tacitly to its continuance. Neither of them could have been made happy when one of Lopez's operatives was intercepted by an agent of the Earl of Essex. Essex was outside the loop.

Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, was a man of high ideals and shabby practices; a self-imagined knight of the courtly tradition, not so much a mad Don Quixote as dim. He was to have his pretty head severed from his neck in the courtyard of the Tower after the failure of his comically inept *coup d'état* in 1601, seven years after the Lopez trial. (The night before the *coup* attempt, he would be rowed across the Thames to the theater so he could watch a special performance he had requested of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, in which Bolingbroke does successfully what he, Essex, would botch on the morrow.) But now, once Essex had evidence Lopez was up to something the doctor could not adequately explain, he became his implacable prosecutor.

Essex was the head of the anti-Spain faction, rabid for war. When Sir Francis Walsingham, who happened to be Essex's father-in-law, died, and it became evident that his successor, Burghley, had only a desultory interest in espionage, Essex set up a shadow foreign service, headed by the brilliant and experienced Anthony Bacon. (Essex also employed Anthony's equally brilliant brother, Francis, future author of the essays.) They had agents throughout Europe, and in England as well. As more cryptic evidence accumulated against Lopez ("The bearer hereof will tell your Worship the price in which your pearls are held. . . . Also . . . in what resolution we rested about a little musk and amber . . . we shall have good profit"), it dawned on Essex that the purpose of the intrigue must have been for the Jewish doctor to poison the Queen. All his resources were thrown into stirring up the court and the London mob against him.

JAMES SHAPIRO believes Lopez was guilty. He does not spend much time on the case, perhaps because his thesis in *Shakespeare and the Jews* would be better served if the doctor were innocent. His index lists five entries under "Poisoning." During the Renaissance, poison figured as a sort of stealth weapon, insidious because it could do its work undetected. The English were fascinated with it. Jews (and Italians) were believed to be adept at its use, and Jewish doctors especially adept. These Jewish doctors were simultaneously thought to be able to effect marvelous cures, and to have a ghoulish lust for the death of their Christian patients. Shapiro mentions the libel published in 1584 in which Dr. Lopez was specifically "credited with skill in poisoning," and he would know from the sources listed in his bibliography how Essex worked these prejudices in his one-man pogrom against the "alien" physician.

"Were Lopez exonerated," Shapiro writes correctly, "a long shadow would be cast on interpretations that portrayed Shylock as one who truly conspired against the life of a Christian." Aside from the telling conflation of Elizabeth and Antonio, this is putting it mildly. Elizabeth was more than just "a Christian": she was part of every Englishman's very definition of what it meant to be English. If it is true that Lopez tried to poison her, we are dealing with something more primal than a mere crime. Yet Shapiro believes that the "meticulous account of the Lopez affair" in David Katz's *Jews in the History of England* (1994) "conclusively demonstrates that Lopez was involved in a conspiracy to poison the Queen." It does not.

Katz, an American who studied in England and now teaches in Israel, thinks that because Lopez and all those taken with him signed confessions, and because not only Essex but Burghley made public and private acknowledgments of Lopez's guilt, he did in fact conspire to poison the Queen. Katz devotes 59 pages to Lopez, but he misses the dramatic play of the strong-willed individuals involved, and shows little sense of the political context. Lacey Baldwin Smith, in his seminal article "English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth Century," written in 1954 while the cold war was still a daily reality, was more on the mark in comparing them to the notorious Moscow show trials. "The determining factor in most cases was not whether the individual had committed treason, but whether he was too dangerous to the state to be allowed to live."

To be indicted was to be convicted, so the real battle to save Lopez was to keep him from being indicted, which it seems Burghley and his son Robert Cecil tried to do. But once Essex had spent enough time interrogating his prisoners to wring accusations from them against each other, and once he got his anti-Spain propaganda machine cranked up, Burghley's and Cecil's efforts failed.

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And once it was clear Lopez was going to be indicted, they had to acknowledge he was guilty, because to do otherwise was to question the justice of the Queen's law, something no person would do who wanted to be spared a charge of treason himself.

And Lopez's confession? Although the common law denied the use of torture, an exception was made for cases, like his, of high treason. Richard Topcliffe, the rackmaster, "avaunted he could stretch a man one foot longer than ever God had intended." So how much can Lopez's confession have been worth?

THE MIND-SET of those who prosecuted Lopez can be sampled in Sir Edward Coke's address to the jury:

> For the poisoning of her highness this miscreant, perjured, murdering traitor and Jewish doctor hath been provided. The plot and practice were more wicked, dangerous and detestable than all former plots and he—Dr. Lopez—a dearer traitor than Judas himself.

And later:

> Dr. Lopez intended to covey himself. . .to Constantinople with his brood, and there to live as a Jew amongst the Jews in Turkey, where he had nephews and kinfolk. And though Englishmen know him as they call them their new Christians, [and] he here was generally so accounted, to [those] to whom he did entrust this great secret, he did ordinarily avow himself to be a very Jew.

Another attorney playing the race card.

Katz mentions that the trial was held at the Guildhall before a special commission consisting of fifteen judges. He does not say how peculiar this was. Most trials for treason were held *in camera* before a small tribunal made up of the Crown's senior councilors. This was done to protect state security. Having the trial at the Guildhall gave it maximum exposure; having the Lord Mayor of London serve as a juror made as much sense as if Marion Barry, the mayor of Washington, D.C., were asked to preside at the trial of KGB mole Aldrich Ames. What Essex did was to turn Lopez's trial into theater.

Lopez was tried in February and hanged in June. The dates are in Katz's narrative, but again he does not mention how peculiar it is that four months intervened between the two events. Essex would lose his head the day after *his* conviction, and that was about the standard wait at a time when there were no endless appeals of verdicts. Why was Lopez kept in the Tower so long? Elizabeth was reluctant to sign the warrant for his execution, but was it because she did not want what she knew to be innocent blood on her hands, or because she was afraid to jeopardize her relationship with Alvaro Mendez, Lopez's important kinsman in Constantinople?

Lopez was very sick by this time, and Essex was firing up the London mob to insist that the sentence be carried out lest the doctor die and cheat the hangman of his due. Reviewing the pressure brought to bear on Elizabeth to get Lopez to Tyburn Hill, Katz writes that "on 7 June 1594, Lopez was carried away from the Tower and the Queen's protection to Queen's Bench prison in Southwark, and then to the court of the Queen's Bench at Westminster." But why was he hauled around London in this highly irregular way? According to Katz, once Lopez was out of the Tower he was not under "the Queen's protection." But he does not spell out the implication: Elizabeth never did release Lopez to the executioner; she released him to intermediate authorities who did.

In a footnote, Katz cites the early-20th-century English historian Martin Hume, and he lists three of Hume's works in his bibliography. But he does not mention Hume's paper, "The So-called Conspiracy of Dr. Ruy Lopez." (Shapiro cites it in a footnote.) Hume, an expert on Spanish-English relations in the 16th century, was especially interested in the Spanish plots against the English crown, and he was the first English historian to have access to the secret Spanish diplomatic correspondence of the period. From his research, Hume concludes that while the evidence "does not show [Lopez] to have been a worthy or a good man, [it] does, in my opinion, prove this Jewish physician was not guilty of the crime for which he suffered."

Why does David Katz go to such great and, I believe, disingenuous lengths to "prove" Dr. Lopez guilty of a crime all Englishmen would abhor? After all, as he writes in his preface, "Lopez, the model for Shylock, had far greater influence in the long run on molding public views and prejudices about Jews than the worthy efforts of all the English rabbis put together." But it seems Katz has an agenda: he wants to displace those Anglo-Jewish historians who tried to exonerate Lopez and who, like Cecil Roth, wrote "for an audience of educated people who wanted to be proud of their past." For Katz, the only motive at work in

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human dealings appears to be money; in his telling of the story, no one is ever prompted by genuine religious impulses, patriotism, tribal affection, personal glory, or family concerns—even though there is evidence that Lopez, at great risk, secretly collected and transmitted funds to the synagogue in Amsterdam. For reasons of his own, Katz seems to want the English to believe that, for money, a Jew was willing to kill their most beloved Queen. He is too committed to his agenda to be reliable on this.

KATZ SPEAKS of Lopez's "eternalization" in English literature. Indeed, Lopez ended as meat over the gates of the city, but Shylock is immortal. He lives forever, morphed with the figures of Judas, Sir Jonathas, Barabas, Fagin, Dreyfus, Jay Gatsby's bootlegging partner Meyer Wolfsheim, the Jewish physicians of Stalin's "doctors' plot," and the Jewish doctors who Louis Farrakhan believes are infecting the ghettos with AIDS.

Shylock is in only five scenes in *The Merchant of Venice*. He does nothing criminal, he does not cheat. How then does Shakespeare achieve the aura of preternatural malevolence that surrounds him? It has partly to do with the ghoulish irrationality of setting a pound of flesh as forfeit for the loan Shylock makes to Antonio. If the lien were against Antonio's real estate, and not his organs, Shylock would be just a particularly nasty malcontent.

But what of the contention, heard repeatedly, that Shakespeare is actually *sympathetic* to Shylock? The case rests pretty much on one passage, the "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech. But in Shakespeare, context determines much of what a speech means, and when Shylock makes that speech he is in fact talking to two of the least significant characters in the play, the instantly forgettable Salarino and Salanio: that is, nobodies. Were he talking to Antonio or Portia or the Duke, their presence would give the speech a gravity it does not have. Were the speech in poetry rather than prose, it would indicate an elevated intention on Shakespeare's part. Instead, the speech is, I think, meant as a comic example of the abuse to which rhetoric can be put.

Shylock's speech, remember, begins with six lines of hate-filled screed. ("He hath . . . laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated my enemies. . . .") It takes every bit of an actor's art to segue into the pathos we are accustomed to for the delivery of, "Hath not a Jew eyes?" The syllogism that follows has a major premise that is undeniably true: Jews have the same physical attributes (hands, organs, dimensions, senses, etc.) as Christians. But then Shylock goes on to suggest that *revenge* is a *Christian* practice—a turn an audience would certainly find piquant. This, after all, is a play whose denouement will rest on a speech based on New Testament teachings about the "quality of mercy."

And so Shylock's speech that moves us so deeply when ripped from the play has no effect on anyone in it. Immediately afterward, Salarino and Salanio greet the arrival of Tubal with, "Here comes another of the tribe: a third cannot be matched, unless the devil himself turn Jew." There is nothing here to make one think the speech is aimed at eliciting sympathy for its speaker. I believe it was aimed at drawing contempt.

We like to think that Shakespeare, by virtue of his genius, was exempt from the prejudices of his time, but great writers tend to be the summarizers of their age. As E.M.W. Tillyard put it in *The Elizabethan World Picture*, "Shakespeare's [remarks] on the state of man in the world seem to be utterly [his] own, as if compounded of [his] very lifeblood: [but] divested of their literary form they are the common property of every third-rate mind of the age." This is not to say, with the deconstructionists, that poets and playwrights are *only* capable of echoing their own particular time and place. If that were the case, the past would be dead to us, and authors would be no more responsible for their writings than stenographers. It is their access to beauty, and the power that beauty of expression wields, that opens them to immortality—and also to moral culpability.

I say Shakespeare did great harm to the Jewish people through the creation of his character Shylock, based as he is on centuries of prejudice and on Dr. Roderigo Lopez, whom I believe to have been innocent. And I say, because I know Shakespeare is a great writer, that he intended it.

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Welfare Fixers

Adam Wolfson

In 1982, the journalist Ken Auletta defined *the* question of the underclass: how do we explain why "violence, arson, hostility, and welfare dependency rose during a time when unemployment dropped, official racial barriers were lowered, and government assistance to the poor escalated"?

Indeed, government spending on welfare increased from about $33 billion in 1964 to over $300 billion in 1992 (both figures in 1992 dollars). During the Reagan and Bush years alone, total welfare spending rose more than 50 percent. But all the while, rates of poverty, illegitimacy, non-work, crime, and family break-up got worse, not better. From 1965 to 1990, the illegitimacy rate for blacks rose from 28 to 65 percent, and for whites from 4 to 21 percent. Meanwhile, work among the poor plummeted, to the point where today only about 11 percent of poor households are headed by a full-time worker. For many, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—what most of us think of when we speak of welfare—has become a permanent condition, with over 50 percent of its recipients remaining on the rolls for over ten years.

One thing, however, has changed. Since 1935, when AFDC was first created, through President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in the 1960's, to Bill Clinton's 1992 promise to "end welfare as we know it," welfare innovation and welfare reform were pretty much a Democratic affair. That is no longer the case. When conservative Republicans gained control of Congress in 1994, they also assumed a major share of responsibility for the nation's welfare system and those trapped in it.

How do they intend to proceed? As it happens, although most conservatives agree on the permanent need to end welfare as a federal entitlement, there have been three different and, to some extent, rival schools of thought about how to reform the system. All three have been incorporated in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, which formed the basis of the Republican welfare bill that President Clinton eventually vetoed this past January, and also in the many state plans now being put into effect by such Republican governors as Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin and John Engler of Michigan. The three approaches therefore bear scrutiny, for it is no exaggeration to say that the well-being of America's welfare population, and indeed of American society, depends upon the conceptual clarity with which we approach this long-festering problem.

The most influential of the three schools is associated preeminently with the name of Charles Murray, and its guiding premise is that humans respond rationally to economic incen-

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tives. It is a tribute to the sheer rhetorical force and intellectual brilliance of Murray's extensive writings that, although conservatives often tend to resist mechanistic views of human nature, they have embraced this analysis almost without reservation. The most important parts of the Republican welfare bill, those dealing with "personal responsibility," are in fact based on Murray's logic. I am referring in particular to those sections which attempt to curb the high rates of family disintegration and out-of-wedlock births by the application of negative economic incentives. Under these provisions, states would be permitted (though not required) to deny cash assistance to children born out of wedlock to teenage mothers, and would also be permitted (though again not required) to deny additional cash assistance to mothers on welfare who continue to have more children.

Why, Senator Daniel P. Moynihan asked in connection with this aspect of the conservative reform effort, should children have to pay for the sins of their fathers (and mothers)? The answer is to be found in certain assumptions that were first spelled out by Murray over a decade ago in his now-classic book, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980*. The crucial passage appears midway through the book:

> It is not necessary to invoke the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960's, or changes in the work ethic, or racial differences, or the complexities of post-industrial economies, in order to explain . . . illegitimacy and welfare dependency. All were results that could have been predicted . . . from the changes that social policy made in the rewards and penalties, carrots and sticks, that govern human behavior. All were *rational responses* to changes in the rules of the game of surviving and getting ahead. [Emphasis added]

In other words, according to Murray, the welfare state has provided exactly the wrong incentives to the poor and the underclass by rewarding non-work, family dissolution, and out-of-wedlock births. It follows that if we change the rules of the game, behavior will change with it. Get rid of the economic supports (e.g., AFDC) that enable poor single mothers to support additional children, and they will eventually either abstain from sex, or use birth control, or (one supposes) have abortions.

There is much to Murray's argument. But implementing it might also entail more than the American people and their representatives are willing to swallow. The key to his rationalist approach is "the overriding threat, short-term and tangible." Here is how he describes the threat in a recent article on reducing illegitimacy:

> A major change in the behavior of young women and the adults in their lives will occur only when the prospect of having a child out of wedlock is once again so immediately, tangibly punishing that it overrides everything else. . . . Such a change will take place only when young people have it drummed into their heads from their earliest memories that having a baby without a husband entails awful consequences.

Murray relies heavily on a calculus of pleasure and pain in part because, as a libertarian, he sees no other way. Since government "does not have the right to prescribe how people shall live or to prevent women from having babies," it is left with no options for affecting people's lives other than the tax code. But there is also a deeper reason for Murray's reliance on what he labels "the technology of changing behavior." He thinks it the only effective means of training the human animal. Though he acknowledges the roles of religion and morality in forming people's sensibilities and attitudes, much of the force of these other agencies, he writes, has always been "underwritten by economics."

IT IS perhaps this oddly materialist version of human volition that has led some conservatives to look beyond Murray for solutions to the welfare problem. What if, they ask, gutting the welfare system does not have the desired effect forthwith? It will take a very resolute legislator indeed to go on applying negative incentives for as long as it takes. And even if we concede that negative incentives have their place in any plan of welfare reform, how can we expect young people to aspire to the roles of motherhood and fatherhood unless we offer a more elevated conception of these roles in their own terms?

Interestingly enough, Murray himself wrote the preface to a recent book, Marvin Olasky's *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, which embodies an alternative to the "technology" of behavior control. The book's legislative impact has thus far been slight, but its influence can be felt in measures that would authorize states to contract out their welfare services to private religious charities and to churches. Its stamp is also to be found on Republican efforts to restore civil society, like Senator Dan Coats's Project for

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American Renewal. The book has garnered the endorsements of such heavyweights as William J. Bennett and Newt Gingrich, and later this spring a more policy-oriented sequel will be published by the Free Press under the title *Renewing American Compassion*.

Though Olasky (who teaches at the University of Texas at Austin) agrees with Murray that we should scrap the current welfare system, his analysis of how we got where we are is quite different from Murray's and, correctly understood, leads down different paths. In fact, Olasky turns Murray's thesis on its head. Although he acknowledges the impact of economic incentives on people's behavior, in his view the underlying forces are spiritual and, broadly speaking, religious. Thus, according to Olasky, "the key change of the 1960's" was "not so much new benefit programs [Murray's claim] as a change in consciousness concerning established ones, with government officials approving and even advocating not only larger payouts but a war on shame."

To Olasky, American social-welfare policy has always reflected the dominant theology of the day. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, theology emphasized a merciful but just God and a sinful human nature that only God's grace could cure. This produced a hardheaded approach to social policy: aid to the poor was given in kind, but not in cash; charity, understood as "suffering with" the needy, was personal and paternalistic; material aid was considered secondary to, and dependent upon, saving souls; aid was for the "deserving," not the "undeserving," poor.

But this Calvinist theology lost out in the late 19th century to a universalistic, liberalized view that "emphasized God's love but not God's holiness," that jettisoned belief in original sin for a Rousseau-like belief in the natural goodness of man, and that essentially secularized a whole range of Christian beliefs. The effects on social policy were dramatic and devastating—and, in Olasky's opinion, completely predictable. The state took over the care of the poor, crowding out private charity. Shame and the work ethic were supplanted by the attitude that the poor have a constitutional right—that is, an entitlement—to welfare. Emphasis shifted from improving the spiritual conditions of the poor to improving their material conditions. As Owen Lovejoy, president of the National Conference of Social Work, put it in 1920, the goal would no longer be private salvation but rather the creation of "a divine order on earth as it is in heaven."

Olasky's history describes, in short, a descent, a fall from grace. As a nation, he claims sweepingly, we have been making war not on poverty but on God, and "the corruption is general." Therefore, although he too, like Murray, would tear down the welfare state, he does not expect any sudden alteration in behavior. Rather, he sees in the end of the welfare state an opportunity for private charities, and in particular private religious charities, to take over some of the responsibilities of caring for the poor, especially in the (for him) primary arena of their spiritual needs.

After all, writes Olasky, it was the federal government's entry into the welfare arena that "crowded out" private religious charities in the first place. Remove the government, and the charities will come surging back. Yet he is honest enough to admit that the historical record is not entirely clear on this point: which came first, the increasing involvement of professionals and the government in the lives of the poor, or a decline in voluntarism and religiosity? This is a crucial question, for if something in the culture led to a decline in voluntarism prior to the federal government's takeover of welfare, then a simple withdrawal of the latter will not necessarily lead to an increase in the former.

"In the end," predicts Olasky, "not much will be accomplished without a spiritual revival that transforms the everyday advice people give and receive, and the way we lead our lives." If that were really so, it would be reasonable to conclude that public-welfare programs should not be scrapped at all, but rather kept in place until the hoped-for spiritual revival occurs, lest the poor be left without God and without material support at once. Be that as it may, however, there is much else in Olasky's thinking, particularly about the role of private "compassion," that reformers can make use of in the months and years to come.

THIS BRINGS us to the third current. Unlike the first two, both of which see big government as the principal culprit in the welfare mess, this one envisions a role for government in its solution.

Perhaps the principal figure here is Lawrence Mead of New York University. In his book, *The New Politics of Poverty*, Mead argues, against Murray, that the marginal economic disincentives created by welfare do not explain the really

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staggering extent of non-work and family dissolution in the welfare population. Moreover, having a baby out of wedlock in order to receive a welfare check is not really "rational," in Mead's judgment. Rather, this and other aspects of the behavior of the underclass are the results of a certain personality profile. The non-working poor, says Mead, are defeatist, passive, and psychologically resistant to taking low-skilled jobs. A "culture of poverty" exists that cannot be fully explained by the rationalist model.

What to do? The answer, according to Mead, is workfare, an approach that would require able-bodied recipients of welfare to enter the labor market. By forcing the poor to be like the rest of us, workfare seeks to manage and even (in the words of Congressman Bill Archer) to "transform" them.

The thinking of Mead and others who favor workfare—Mickey Kaus of the *New Republic* is another well-known proponent of such schemes—is evident in the various versions of the Republican welfare-reform bill. All include the basic requirement that for any aid poor people receive from the government, they must work, in the private sphere if possible but in the public sector if not. According to the bill, 50 percent of welfare recipients must be working by 2002; even single mothers with children (over the age of one) should be required to work; and families receiving benefits will be cut off after five years.

Mead argues that workfare represents, in effect, a "new paternalism," a "tutelary regime." And indeed his ideas have alarmed more than a few conservatives, especially those of a libertarian bent. Many believe that any attempt by the government to mold behavior, even that of the poor, marks a break from the American tradition of limited government. Such fears are in Mead's view well-founded. But the appearance of the contemporary underclass itself marks, he believes, a watershed development in our national life, if not "the end . . . of an entire political tradition." That tradition—the tradition of the Founders, and of such classical liberals as Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu—"took self-reliance for granted." It assumed that people are, by nature, rational maximizers of their economic interests. But now it appears that many are not; and so a "new tradition," a "new political theory," even a "new political language" is needed.

All this seems somewhat overheated. For some reason, many of those who propose work as a solution to the welfare problem cannot resist militaristic metaphors. (Thus Mickey Kaus, in *The End of Equality*, urges Americans to build a "Work Ethic State.") But we need not really move beyond our own liberal tradition in order to enforce the norm of work. The Founders themselves recognized that humans are frequently irrational, indeed even lazy. And Adam Smith, the classical liberal *par excellence*, was not mincing words when he observed that among the "inferior ranks" of society there was a surfeit of "gross ignorance and stupidity." Rather than positing rational self-interest as a universal human trait, Smith and other classical liberals thought that through persuasion and law, it would be possible to turn men away from their former pursuits of military glory and religious enthusiasm toward "small savings and small gains." A little bit of workfare for those still unmindful of their economic self-interest thus need hardly spell the end of the American political tradition.

WHAT IS especially interesting about the three conservative strands of thought about welfare is that despite the theoretical differences among them, together they provide a coherent guide as to how to fix a broken system. As men are not angels, Charles Murray's negative incentives have their place. But neither are men brutes, and hence something more is needed than a "technology" of behavioral change. As Marvin Olasky reminds us, a rebirth of the spirit of religious charity would change many lives for the better. And as Lawrence Mead reminds us, in a commercial republic such as ours, work is the proper condition for all who are able.

Indeed, the politicians have seen the big picture in a way that is perhaps not so easy for the lone social thinker to do. The Republican welfare-reform bills in Congress, along with the many state plans being put into effect by Republican governors, make use of Murray's incentives, Olasky's religious charities, and Mead's workfare. If there are theoretical and practical difficulties with each of these approaches, it is precisely the combination that may make conservative welfare reform politically palatable and even, in the end, effective.

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The Four Questions

A Story

Allegra Goodman

Ed is sitting in his mother-in-law Estelle's gleaming kitchen. "Is it coming in on time?" Estelle asks him. He is on the phone checking on Yehudit's flight from San Francisco.

"It's still ringing," Ed says. He sits on one of the kitchen swivel chairs and twists the telephone cord through his fingers. One wall of the kitchen is papered in a yellow and brown daisy pattern, the daisies as big as Ed's hand. The window-shade has the same pattern on it. Ed's in-laws live in a 1954 ranch house with all the original period details. Every year, practically, since their wedding, he and Sarah have come out to Long Island for Passover, and the house has stayed the same. The front bedroom, Sarah's old room, has a blue carpet, organdy curtains, and white furniture, including a kidney-shaped vanity table. There is a creaky trundle bed to wheel out from under Sarah's bed, and Ed always sleeps there on the trundle, a step below Sarah.

In the old days, Sarah and Ed would fly up from Washington with the children, but now the kids come in on their own. Miriam and Ben take the shuttle down from Boston; Avi is driving in from Wesleyan, and Yehudit, the youngest, is flying in from Stanford because the holiday coincides with her spring break. Ed is going to pick her up at Kennedy tonight. "It's coming in on time," Ed tells Estelle.

"Good," she says, and she takes away his empty glass. Automatically, instinctively, Estelle puts things away. She folds up the newspaper before Ed gets to the business section. She'll clear the table while the slower eaters are contemplating seconds. And, when Ed and Sarah visit, Ed will find that his things have inexorably been straightened. His tangle of coins, keys, watch, and comb has been untangled. The shirt and socks on the bed have been washed and folded. It's the kind of service you might expect in a fine hotel. In West Hempstead it makes Ed uneasy. His mother-in-law is in constant motion, sponging, sweeping, snapping the refrigerator door open and shut. Flicking off lights after him as he leaves the room. Now she is checking the oven. "This is a beautiful bird. Sarah," she calls into the den. "I want you to tell Miriam when she gets here that this turkey is kosher. Is she going to eat it?"

"I don't know," Sarah says. Her daughter the medical student (Harvard medical school) has been getting religiously more observant every year. In college she started bringing paper plates and plastic utensils to her grandparents' house because Estelle and Sol don't keep kosher. Then she began eating off paper plates even at home in Washington. Although Ed and Sarah have a kosher kitchen, they wash their milk and meat dishes together in the dishwasher.

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"I never would have thought it," Estelle says. "Yehudit was always finicky. I could have predicted she would become a vegetarian. But Miriam used to come and have more of everything. She used to love my turkey."

"It's not that, Mommy," Sarah says.

"I know. It's this Orthodoxy of hers. I have no idea where she gets it from. From Jonathan, I guess." Jonathan is Miriam's fiancé.

"No," Ed says, "she started before she even met Jon."

"It wasn't from anyone in this family. Are they still talking about having that Orthodox rabbi marry them?"

"We met with him," Ed says.

"What was his name, Lowenthal?"

"Lewitsky," Ed says.

"Black coat and hat?"

"No, no, he's a young guy—"

"That doesn't mean anything," Estelle says.

"He was very nice, actually," Sarah says. "The problem is that he won't perform a ceremony at Shaarei Tzedek."

"It's not Orthodox enough for him?"

"Well, it's a Conservative synagogue. Of course, our rabbi wouldn't let him use S.T. anyway. Rabbi Landis performs all the ceremonies at S.T. Miriam is talking about getting married outside."

"Outside!" Estelle says. "In June! In Washington D.C.? When I think of your poor mother, Ed, in that heat!" Estelle is eleven years younger than Ed's mother Rose, and always solicitous about her health. "What are they thinking of? Where could they possibly get married outside?"

"I don't know," Ed says, "Dumbarton Oaks. The Rose Garden. They're a couple of silly kids."

"This is not a barbecue," Estelle says.

"What can we do," Sarah asks, "if they insist on this rabbi?"

"And it's March, already," Estelle says grimly. "Here—" she takes a pink bakery box from the refrigerator. "Ed, you'd better finish these eclairs before she gets here."

"I'd better not."

"It's a long time till dinner," Estelle warns as she puts the box back.

"That's OK, I'll live off the fat of the land," says Ed, patting his stomach.

"I got her sealed matzahs, sealed macaroons, vacuum-packed gefilte fish." Estelle displays the packages on the scalloped wood shelves of her pantry.

"Don't worry. The boys are going to eat," Sarah assures her mother. They bring the tablecloth out to the dining room. "Remember Avi's friend, Noam?"

"The gum chewer. He sat at this table and ate four pieces of cake!"

"And now Noam is an actuary," says Sarah.

"And Avi is bringing a girl to dinner."

"She's a lovely girl," Sarah says.

"Beautiful," Estelle agrees with a worried look.

In the kitchen Ed is thinking he might have an eclair after all. Estelle always has superb pastry in the house. Sol had started out as a baker, and still has a few friends in the business. "Are these from Leonard's?" Ed asks when Sol comes in.

"Leonard's was bought out," Sol says, easing himself into a chair. "These are from Magic Oven. How is the teaching?"

"Well, I have a heavy load. Two of my colleagues went on sabbatical this year—"

"Left you short-handed?"

"Yeah," Ed says, "I've been teaching seven hours a week."

"That's all?" Sol is surprised.

"I mean, on top of my research."

"It doesn't sound that bad."

Ed starts to answer. Instead, he goes to the refrigerator and gets out the eclairs.

"Leonard's were better," Sol muses. "He used a better custard."

"But these are pretty good. What was that? Was that the kids?"

Ed runs out to meet the cab in the driveway, pastry in hand. He pays the driver as his two eldest tumble out of the cab with their luggage—Ben's back pack and duffel, Miriam's canvas tote and the suitcase she has inherited, bright pink, patched with silver metallic tape, dating from Ed and Sarah's honeymoon in Paris.

"Daddy!" Miriam says. "What are you eating?"

Ed looks at his eclair. Technically all this sort of thing should be out of the house by now—all bread, cake, pastry, candy, soda, ice cream—anything even sweetened with corn syrup. And, of course, Miriam takes the technicalities seriously. He knows she must have stayed up late last night in her tiny apartment in Cambridge, vacuuming the crevices in the couch, packing away her toaster-oven. He finishes off the eclair under her disapproving eyes. He doesn't need the calories, either, she is thinking. She has become very

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Puritanical, his daughter, and it baffles him, her strict views on religion. They had raised the children in a liberal, rational, joyous way—raised them to enjoy the Jewish tradition, and Ed can't understand why Miriam should choose austerity and obscure ritualism. She is only twenty-three—even if she is getting married in June. How can a young girl be attracted to this kind of legalism? It disturbs him. On the other hand, he knows she is right about his weight and blood pressure. He'll take it easy on dinner.

MEANWHILE, BEN carries in the bags and dumps them in the den. "Hi Grandma! Hi Grandpa! Hi Mom!" He grabs the TV remote and starts flipping channels. No one is worried about Ben becoming too intense. He is a senior at Brandeis, six feet tall with overgrown ash-brown hair. He has no thoughts about the future. No ideas about life after graduation. No plan. He is studying psychology in a distracted sort of way. When he flops down on the couch he looks like a big, amiable golden retriever.

"Get me the extra chairs from the basement, dear," Estelle tells him. "We've been waiting for you to get here. Then, Sarah, you can get the wine glasses. You can reach up there." Estelle is in her element. Her charm bracelet jingles as she talks. She directs Ben to go down under the Ping-Pong table without knocking over the boxes stacked there; she points Sarah to the cabinet above the refrigerator.

Estelle is smaller than Sarah—five-feet-two-and-a-quarter—and her features are sharper. She had been a brunette when she was younger, but now her hair is auburn. Her eyes are lighter brown as well, and her skin dotted with sun spots from the winters in Florida. "Oh—" she sighs suddenly as her granddaughter Miriam brings a box of paper plates from the kitchen. "Why do you have to—?"

"Because these dishes aren't *Pesah* dishes."

Estelle looks at the table, set with her white and gold Noritake china. "This is the good china," she says. "These are the *Pesah* dishes."

"But you use them for the other holidays, too," Miriam tells her. "They've had bread on them and cake and pumpkin pie and all kinds of stuff."

"Oooh, you are sooo stubborn!" Estelle puts her hands on her tall granddaughter's shoulders and gives her a shake. The height difference makes it look as though she is pleading as she looks up into Miriam's face. Then the oven timer goes off and she rushes into the kitchen. Sarah is washing lettuce at the sink. "I'll do the salads last," Estelle tells her. "After Ed goes to the airport." Miriam is still on her mind. What kind of seder will Miriam have next year after she is married? Estelle has met Miriam's fiancé, who is just as observant as she is. "Did you see?" she asks Sarah. "I left you my list, for Miriam's wedding."

"What list?"

"On the table. Here," Estelle gives Sarah the typed list. "These are the names and addresses you asked for—the people I need to invite."

Sarah looks at the list. She turns the page and scans the names, doing some calculations in her head. "Mommy!" she says, "There are 42 people on this list!"

"Not all of them will be able to come, of course," Estelle reassures her.

"We're having 100 people at this wedding, remember? Including Ed's family, and the kids' friends—"

"Well, this is our family. These are your cousins, Sarah."

Sarah looks again at the list. "When was the last time I saw these people?" she asks. "Miriam wouldn't even recognize some of them. And what's this? The Seligs? The Magids? Robert and Trudy Rothman? These aren't cousins."

"Sarah! Robert and Trudy are my dearest friends. We've known the Seligs and the Magids for 30 years."

"This is a small family wedding," Sarah tells her mother. "I'm sure they'll understand—"

Estelle knows that they wouldn't understand.

"We have to cut down this list," Sarah says.

Estelle doesn't get a chance to reply. Avi has arrived from Connecticut, and he's standing in the living room with Ed, Sarah, and Ben. *She* stands next to him: Amy, his friend from Wesleyan. Estelle still holds back from calling her his girlfriend. Nevertheless, there she is. She has gorgeous strawberry-blond hair and she has brought Estelle flowers—mauve and rose tulips with fancy curling petals. No one else brought flowers. "They're beautiful. Look, Sol, aren't they beautiful?" Estelle says. "Avi, you can take your bag to the den. The boys are sleeping in the den; the girls are sleeping in the sun room."

"I don't want to sleep in the den," Avi says.

"Why not?" asks Estelle.

"Because he snores." Avi points at his brother. "He's so loud. I'd rather sleep in the basement."

Everyone looks at him. It's a finished basement and it's got carpeting, but it is cold down there.

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"You've shared a room with Ben for years," Sarah says.

"You'll freeze down there," Estelle tells him.

"I have a down sleeping bag."

"You never complained at home," Sarah says.

"Oh, give me a break," Ben mutters under his breath. "They aren't going to have wild sex in a sleeping bag in the basement."

"What?" Ed asks. "Did you say something, Ben?"

"No," Ben says, and ambles back into the den.

"I don't want you in the basement," Estelle tells her grandson.

"Can I help you in the kitchen, Mrs. Kirshenbaum?" asks Amy.

Estelle and Amy make the chopped liver. The boys are watching TV in the den, and Ed and Sarah are lying down. Miriam is on the phone with Jon.

"Did you want me to chop the onions, too?" Amy asks Estelle.

"Oh, no. Just put them there and I'll take out the livers, and then we attach the grinder—" She snaps the grinder onto the Kitchen Aid and starts feeding in the broiled livers. "You add the onions and the eggs." She pushes in the hard-boiled eggs. "And the *schmaltz*." She is explaining to Amy all about chopped liver, but her mind is full of questions. How serious is it with Avi? What do Amy's parents think? They are Methodist, Estelle knows that. And Amy's uncle is a Methodist minister. They can't approve of all this. But then, of course, how much do they know about it? Avi barely talks about Amy. They've only met her once before when they came up for Avi's jazz-band concert. And then suddenly Avi said he wanted to bring her with him to the seder. But he's never really dated anyone before, and kids shy away from anything serious at this age.

Amy's family goes to church every Sunday. They're quite religious. Amy had explained that to Estelle on the phone when she called up about the book. She wanted Estelle to recommend a book for her to read about Passover. Estelle didn't know what to say. If only Amy weren't Methodist. She is an absolute doll. The tulips stand on the counter in the big barrel-cut crystal vase. The most beautiful colors.

By the time Ed goes off to the airport, everything is ready except the salad. They dress for dinner while he is gone. "Do you have a decent shirt?" Sarah asks Ben, who is still watching television, "Or is that as good as it gets?"

"I didn't have a chance to do my laundry before I got here, so I have hardly any clothes," Ben explains to his mother.

"Ben!" Estelle looks at him in his red and green plaid hunting shirt. Avi is wearing a nice starched Oxford.

"Maybe he could borrow one of Grandpa's," Miriam suggests.

"Come on, Ben," says Sol, "let's see if we can strap you into something."

They wait for Ed and Yehudit in the living room, almost as if they were expecting guests. Ben sits stiffly on the couch in his too small, stiff shirt. He stares at the silver coffee service carefully wrapped in clear plastic. He cracks his knuckles, and then he twists his neck to crack his neck joints. Everyone screams at him. Then, finally, they hear the car in the driveway.

"You're sick as a dog!" Sarah exclaims when Yehudit gets inside.

Yehudit blows her nose and looks at them with feverish, jet-lagged eyes. "Yeah, I think I have mono," she says.

"Oh my God," says Estelle. "She has to get into bed. That cot in the sun room isn't very comfortable."

"How about a hot drink?" suggests Sarah.

"I'll get her some soup," Estelle says.

"Does it have a vegetable base?" Yehudit asks.

"What she needs is a decongestant," says Ed.

They bundle her up in the Lazy-Boy chair in the den and tuck her in with an afghan and a mug of hot chocolate.

"That's not kosher for *Pesah*," worries Miriam.

"Cool it," Ed says. Then they sit down at the seder table.

ED ALWAYS leads the seder. Sol and Estelle love the way he does it because he is so knowledgeable. Ed's area of expertise is the Middle East, and so he ties Passover to the present day. And he is eloquent. They are very proud of their son-in-law.

"This is our festival of freedom," Ed says, "commemorating our liberation from slavery." He picks up a piece of matzah and reads from his New Revised Haggadah: "This is the bread which our fathers and mothers ate in *Mitzraim* when they were slaves." He adds from the translator's note: "We use the Hebrew word *Mitzraim* to denote the ancient land of Egypt—"

"As opposed to modern-day *Mitzraim*," Miriam says dryly.

"To differentiate it from modern Egypt," Ed

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reads. Then he puts down the matzah and extemporizes. "We eat this matzah so we will never forget what slavery is, and so that we continue to empathize with afflicted peoples throughout the world: those torn apart by civil wars; those starving or homeless; those crippled by poverty and disease. We think of the people oppressed for their religious or political beliefs. In particular, we meditate on the people in our own country who have not yet achieved full freedom; those discriminated against because of their race, gender, or sexual preference. We think of the subtle forms of slavery as well as the obvious ones—the gray areas that are now coming to light: sexual harassment, verbal abuse—"

Miriam is ignoring him. She is sitting there chanting to herself out of her Orthodox Haggadah.

"Finally, we turn to the world's hot spot—the Middle East," Ed says, "we think of war-torn Israel and pray for compromises. We consider the Palestinians who have no land to call their own, and we call for moderation and perspective. As we sit around the seder table we look to the past to give us insight into the present."

"BEAUTIFUL," MURMURS Estelle. But Ed looks down unhappily to where the kids are sitting. Ben has his feet up on Yehudit's empty chair and Avi is playing with Amy's hair. Miriam is still poring over her Haggadah.

"It's time for the Four Questions," he says sharply. "The youngest child will chant the Four Questions," he adds for Amy's benefit.

Sarah checks on Yehudit in the den. "She's asleep. Avi will have to do it."

"Amy is two months younger than I am," Avi says.

"Why don't we all say it together?" Estelle suggests. "She shouldn't have to read it all alone."

"I don't mind," Amy says. She reads: "Why is this night different from all other nights? On other nights we eat leavened bread; why on this night do we eat matzah? On other nights we eat all kinds of herbs; why on this night do we eat bitter herbs? On other nights we do not dip even once; why on this night do we dip twice? On other nights we eat either sitting up or reclining; why on this night do we all recline?"

"Now, Avi, read it in Hebrew," Ed says, determined that Avi should take part—feeling, as well, that the questions sound strange in English. Anthropological.

"What was that part about dipping twice?" Amy asks when Avi is done.

"That's when you dip the parsley into the salt water," Ben tells her.

"It doesn't have to be parsley," Sarah says. "Just greens."

"We're not up to that yet," Ed tells them. "Now I'm going to answer the questions." He reads: "We do these things to commemorate our slavery in *Mitzraim*. For if God had not brought us out of slavery, we and all future generations would still be enslaved. We eat matzah because our ancestors did not have time to let their bread rise when they left E—*Mitzraim*. We eat bitter herbs to remind us of the bitterness of slavery. We dip greens in salt water to remind us of our tears, and we recline at the table because we are free men and women.

"OK," Ed flips a few pages. "The second theme of Passover is about transmitting tradition to future generations. And we have here in the Haggadah examples of four kinds of children—each with his or her own needs and problems. What we have here are instructions on how to tailor the message of Passover to each one. So we read about four hypothetical cases. Traditionally, they were described as four sons: the wise son, the wicked son, the simple son, and the one who does not know how to ask. We refer to these children in modern terms as: committed, uncommitted, unaffiliated, and assimilated. Let's go around the table now. Estelle, would you like to read about the committed child?"

"What does the committed child say?" Estelle reads. "What are the practices of Passover which God has commanded us? Tell him or her precisely what the practices are."

"What does the uncommitted child say?" Sol continues. "What use to you are the practices of Passover? To you, and not to himself. The child excludes him or herself from the community. Answer him/her: this is on account of what God did for me when I went out of *Mitzraim*. For me, and not for us. This child can only appreciate personal gain."

"What does the unaffiliated child say?" asks Sarah. "What is all this about? Answer him or her simply: we were slaves and now we are free."

"But for the assimilated child," Ben reads, "it is up to us to open the discussion."

"We can meditate for a minute," Ed says, "on a fifth child who died in the Holocaust." They sit silently and look at their plates.

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"It's interesting," says Miriam, "that so many things come in fours on Passover. There are four questions, four sons; you drink four cups of wine—"

"It's probably just coincidence," Ben says.

"Thanks," Miriam tells him. "I feel much better. So much for discussion at the seder." She glares at her brother. Couldn't he even shave before he came to the table? She pushes his feet off the chair.

"Don't be such a pain in the butt," Ben mutters.

Ed speeds on through the Haggadah. "The ten plagues that befell the Egyptians for refusing to let the Israelites go: "Blood; frogs; vermin; wild beasts; murrain; boils; hail; locusts; darkness; death of the first-born." He looks up from his book and says, "We think of the suffering of the Egyptians as they faced these calamities. We are grateful for our deliverance, but we remember that the oppressor was also oppressed—" He pauses there, struck by his own phrase. It's very good. "We cannot celebrate at the expense of others, nor can we say that we are truly free until the other oppressed peoples of the world are also free. We make common cause with all peoples and all minorities. Our struggle is their struggle, and their struggle is our struggle. We turn now to the blessing over the wine and the matzah. Then," he nods to Estelle, "we'll be ready to eat."

"Daddy," Miriam says. "This is ridiculous. This seder is getting shorter every year."

"We're doing it the same way we always do it," Ed tells her.

"You always skip the most important parts."

"Miriam!" Sarah hushes her.

"Why do we have to spend the whole time talking about civil rights?"

"Because that's what Passover is about," Sol tells her.

"Oh, OK, fine," Miriam says.

"Time for the gefilte fish," Estelle announces. Amy gets up to help her and the two of them bring in the salad plates. Each person has a piece of fish on a bed of lettuce with two cherry tomatoes and a dab of magenta horseradish sauce.

Sarah stands up, debating whether to wake Yehudit for dinner. Instead she walks over to Miriam and sits next to her for a minute. "Miriam," she whispers. "I think you could try a little harder—"

"There's no reason for that. There's no reason for you to talk that way to Daddy."

Miriam looks down at her book and continues reading to herself in Hebrew.

"Miriam?"

"What? I'm reading all the stuff Daddy skipped."

"Did you hear what I said? You're upsetting your father."

"It doesn't say a single word about minorities in here," Miriam says stubbornly.

"He's talking about the modern context—"

Miriam looks up at Sarah. "What about the original context?" she asks. "As in the Jewish people? As in God?"

Yehudit toddles in from the den with the afghan trailing behind her. "Can I have some plain salad?" she asks.

"This fish is wonderful," Sol says.

"Outstanding," Ed agrees.

"More," says Ben with his mouth full.

"Ben! Gross! Can't you eat like a human being?" Avi asks him.

"It's Manishewitz Gold Label," Estelle says. "Yehudit, how did you catch this? Did they say it was definitely mono?"

"No—I don't know what it is," Yehudit says. "I started getting sick on the weekend when we went to sing at the Jewish Community Center for the seniors."

"It's nice that you do that," Estelle says. "Very nice. They're always so appreciative."

"Yeah, I guess so. There was this old guy there and he asked me, 'Do you know *Oyfn pripichik*?' I said, 'Yes, we did,' and he said, 'Then please, can I ask you, don't sing *Oyfn pripichik*. They always come here and sing it for us and it's so depressing.' Then when we left, this little old lady beckoned to me and she said, 'What's your name?' I told her, and she said, 'You're very plain, dear, but you're very nice.'"

"That's terrible!" Estelle says. "Did she really say that?"

"Yup."

"It's not true," Estelle says. "You should hear what everyone says about my granddaughters when they see your pictures. Wait till they see you—maid of honor at the wedding. What color did you pick for the wedding?" she asks Miriam.

"What?" Miriam says, looking up from her Haggadah.

Ed is gazing at Miriam and feeling that she is trying to undermine his whole seder. Who is she to criticize the way he leads the service? What does she think she is doing? He can remember seders when she couldn't stay awake until dinner.

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He remembers when she couldn't even sit up. When he could hold her head in the palm of his hand.

"I think peach is a hard color," Estelle is saying. "It's a hard color to find. You know, a pink is one thing. A pink looks lovely on just about everyone. Peach is a hard color to wear. When your Mommy and Daddy got married we had a terrible time with the color because the temple was maroon. There was a terrible maroon carpet in the sanctuary, and the social hall was maroon as well. There was maroon flocked wallpaper. Remember, honey?" she asks Sol. He nods. "Now it's a rust color. Why it's rust, I don't know. But we ended up having the bridesmaids in pink because that was about all we could do. And in the pictures it looked beautiful."

"It photographed very well," Sol says.

"I'll have to show you the pictures," Estelle tells Miriam. "The whole family was there and such dear, dear friends. God willing, they'll be at your wedding, too."

"No, I don't think so," says Ed. "We're just having the immediate family. We're only having 100 people."

Estelle smiles, "I don't think you can keep a wedding to 100 people."

"Why not?" Ed asks.

Sarah clears the fish plates nervously. She hates it when Ed takes this tone of voice with her parents.

"Well, I mean not without excluding," Estelle says. "And at a wedding you don't want to exclude—"

"I don't think it's incumbent on us to invite everyone we know to Miriam's wedding," Ed says crisply. Sarah puts her hand on his shoulder. "It's not even necessary to invite everyone *you* know."

Estelle raises her eyebrows and Sarah hopes silently that her mother will not whip out the invitation list she's written up. The list with 42 names that mercifully Ed has not yet seen.

"I'm not inviting everyone I know," Estelle says.

"Grandma," Miriam says, looking up. "Are you inviting people to my wedding?"

"Of course not," says Estelle, "But I've told my cousins about it and my dear friends. You know, some of them were at your parents' wedding. The Magids. The Rothmans."

"Woah, woah, wait a second," says Ed. "We aren't going to revive that guest list. I think we need to define what we mean by immediate family."

"I'll define for you," Estelle says, "what I mean by the family. These are the people who knew us when we lived above the bakery. It wasn't just at your wedding. They were at *our* wedding before the war. We lived within blocks of each other; and when we moved out to the Island and left the bakery they moved, too. I still talk to Trudy Rothman every day. Who has friends like that? Years ago in the basement we hired a dancing teacher and we used to take dancing lessons together. Fox trot, Cha-cha, tango. We went to temple with them. We celebrated such times! I think you don't see the bonds because you kids are scattered. We left Bensonhurst together and we came out to the Island together. We've lived here since '56 in this house. We saw this house go up, and their houses were going up too. We went through it together, coming into the wide open spaces, having a garden, trees, and lawns. We see them all the time. In the winters we meet them down in Florida; we go to their grandchildren's weddings—"

"But I'm paying for this wedding," Ed says.

Estelle leaves the table and goes into the kitchen.

"Dad," Avi groans. He whispers to Amy, "I warned you my family is weird."

"I'm really hungry," Ben says. "Can we have the turkey, Grandma? Seriously, all I've had to eat today was a Snickers bar."

In silence Estelle returns from the kitchen carrying the turkey. In silence she hands it to Sol to carve it up. She passes the platter around the table. Only slowly does the conversation sputter to life. Estelle talks along with the rest but she doesn't speak to Ed. She won't even look at him.

ED LIES on his back on the trundle bed next to Sarah. She is lying on the other bed staring at the ceiling. Every time either of them moves an inch the bed creaks. Ed has never heard such loud creaking; the beds seem to moan and cry out in the night. "The point? The point is this," Sarah tells him. "It was neither the time nor the place to go over the guest list."

"Your mother was the one who brought it up!" Ed exclaims.

"And you were the one who started in on her."

"Sarah, what was I supposed to say—thank you for disregarding what we explicitly told her? Yes, you can invite everyone you know to your granddaughter's wedding? I'm not going to get steamrolled into this—that's what she was trying to do, manipulate this seder into an opportunity to get exactly who she wants, how many she wants—with no discussion whatsoever."

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"The discussion does not have to dominate this holiday," Sarah says.

"You let these things go and she'll get out of control. She'll go from giving us a few addresses to inviting 20, 30 people, 50 people."

"She's not going to do that."

"She knows hundreds of people. How many people were at our wedding—200? 300?"

"Oh, stop. We're mailing all the invitations ourselves from D.C."

"Fine."

"So don't be pig-headed about it," Sarah says.

"Pig-headed? Is that what you said?"

"Yes."

"That's not fair. You don't want these people at the wedding any more than I do—"

"Ed, there are ways to explain that, there are tactful ways. You have absolutely no concept—"

"I am tactful. I am a very tactful person. But there are times when I'm provoked."

"What you said about paying for the wedding was completely uncalled for."

"But it was true!" Ed cries out, and his bed moans under him as if it feels the weight of his exasperation.

"Shh," Sarah hisses.

"I don't know what you want from me."

"I want you to apologize to my mother and try to salvage this holiday for the rest of us."

"I'm not going to apologize to that woman," Ed mutters. Sarah doesn't answer him. "What?" he asks into the night. His voice sounds to his ears not just defensive but wronged, deserving of sympathy. "Sarah?"

"I have nothing more to say to you," she says.

"Sarah, she is being completely unreasonable."

"Oh, stop it."

"I'm not going to grovel in front of someone intent on sabotaging this wedding."

Sarah doesn't answer.

The next day Ed wakes up with a sharp pain in his left shoulder. It is 5:19 in the morning, and everyone else is sleeping—except for Estelle. He can hear her moving around the house adjusting things, flipping light switches, twitching lamp shades, tweaking pillows. He doesn't know which is worse, his shoulder or those fussy little noises. They grate on him like the rattling of cellophane paper. When at last he struggles out of the sagging bed, he runs to the shower and blasts hot water on his head. He takes an inordinately long shower. He is probably using up all the hot water. He imagines Estelle pacing around outside, wondering how in the world anyone can stand in the shower an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes. She is worried about wasting water, frustrated that the door is locked and she cannot get in to straighten the toothbrushes. The fantasy warms him.

By the time the children are up it has become a muggy, sodden spring day. Yehudit sleeps off her cold medicine, Ben watches television in the den with Sol, and Miriam shuts herself up in her room in disgust because watching TV violates the holiday. Avi goes out with Amy for a walk. They leave right after lunch and are gone for hours. Where could they go for three hours in West Hempstead? Are they stopping at every duck pond? Browsing in every strip mall? It's a long, empty day. The one good thing is that Sarah isn't angry at him any more. She massages his stiff shoulder. "These beds have to go," she says, "they're 30 years old."

"It would probably be more comfortable to lie on the floor," Ed says. He watches Estelle as she sets the table for the second night's seder. "You notice she still isn't speaking to me."

"Well," Sarah says, "what do you expect?" But she says it sympathetically. "We have to call your mother," she reminds him.

"Yeah, I suppose so." Ed heaves a sigh. "Get the kids. Make them talk to her."

"Hey, Grandma," says Ben when they put him on the phone. "What's up? Oh yeah? It's dull here, too. No, we aren't doing anything. Just sitting around. No, Avi's got his girlfriend here so they went out. Amy. I don't know. Don't ask me. Miriam's here, too. Yup. What? Everybody's like dealing with who's going to come to her wedding. Grandma E? Oh, she's fine. I think she's kind of pissed at Dad, though."

Ed takes the phone out of Ben's hands.

"Kind of what?" his mother Rose is asking.

"Hello, Ma?" Ed carries the cordless phone into the bedroom and sits at the vanity table. As he talks he can see himself from three angles in the triptych mirror. He sees the dome of his forehead with just a few strands of hair; his eyes, tired, a little bloodshot, even; the pink of his ears, soft and fleshy. He looks terrible.

"Ed," his mother says. "Sarah told me you are excluding Estelle's family from the wedding."

"*Family*?" What family? These are Estelle's friends."

"And what about Esther and Pauline? Should I disinvite them, too?"

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"Ma! You invited your neighbors?"

"Of course! To my own granddaughter's wedding? Of course I did."

"Ma," Ed snaps. "As far as I'm concerned, the only invitations to this wedding are going to be the ones printed up and issued by me, from my house. This is Miriam's wedding. For her. Not for you, not for Estelle."

"You are wrong," Rose says simply. Throughout the day these words ring in Ed's ears. It is he who feels wronged. It's not as if his mother or Sarah's mother were contributing to the wedding in any way. They just make their demands. They aren't doing anything.

Miriam is sitting in the kitchen spreading whipped butter on a piece of matzah. Ed sits down next to her. "Where's Grandma?" he asks.

"She went out to get milk," says Miriam, and then she bursts out, "Daddy, I don't want all those people at the wedding."

"I know, sweetie." It's wonderful to hear Miriam appeal to him, to be able to sympathize with her as if she weren't almost a doctor with severe theological opinions.

"I don't even know them," Miriam says.

"We don't have to invite anyone you don't want to invite," Ed says firmly.

"But I don't want Grandma all mad at me at the wedding," her voice wavers. "I don't know what to do."

"You don't have to do anything," Ed says. "You just relax."

"I think maybe we should just invite them," Miriam says in a small voice.

"*Oy*," says Ed.

"Or some of them," she says.

Someone rattles the back door and they both jump. It's just Sarah. "Let me give you some advice," she says. "Invite these people, invite your mother's people, and let that be an end to it. We don't need this kind of *tsuris*."

"No!" Ed says.

"I think she's right," says Miriam.

He looks at her. "Would that make you feel better?" She nods and he gets to give her a hug. "I don't get to hug my Miriam any more," he tells Sarah.

"I know," she says. "That's Grandma's car. I'm going to tell her she can have the Magids."

"But you make it clear to her," Ed starts.

"Ed," she says. "I'm not making anything clear to her."

At the second seder, Estelle looks at everyone benignly from where she stands between the kitchen and the dining room. Sol makes jokes about weddings, and Avi gets carried away by the good feeling, puts his arm around Methodist Amy and says, "Mom and Dad, I promise when I get married I'll elope." No one laughs at this.

When it's time for the Four Questions Ed reads them himself. "Why is this night different from all other nights? On other nights we eat leavened bread. Why on this night do we eat matzah? Ben, could you put your feet on the floor?" When Ed is done he says, "So essentially each generation has an obligation to explain our Exodus to the next generation—whether they like it or not."

THAT NIGHT in the moaning trundle bed Ed thinks about the question Miriam raised at the first seder. Why are there four of everything on Passover? Four children. Four questions. Four cups of wine. Lying there with his eyes closed, Ed sees these foursomes dancing in the air. He sees them as in the naive illustrations of his 1960's Haggadah. Four gold cups, the words of the Four Questions outlined in teal blue; four children's faces. The faces of his own children, not as they are now but as they were nine, ten years ago. And then, as he falls asleep, a vivid dream flashes before him. Not the children, but Sarah's parents, along with the Rothmans, the Seligs, the Magids, and all their friends, perhaps 1,000 of them walking *en masse* like marathoners over the Verazzano Bridge. They are carrying suitcases and ironing boards, bridge tables, tennis rackets, and lawn chairs. They are driving their poodles before them as they march together. It is a procession both majestic and frightening. At Estelle's feet, at the feet of her 1,000 friends, the steel bridge trembles. Its long cables sway above the water. And as Ed watches he feels the trembling, the pounding footsteps. It's like an earthquake rattling, pounding, vibrating through his whole body. He wants to turn away; he wants to dismiss it, but still he feels it, unmistakable, not to be denied. The thundering of history.

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What Use Is the UN?

Joshua Muravchik

For a golden jubilee, the celebrations were strangely subdued. To commemorate 50 years since the founding of the United Nations, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution expressing satisfaction that the world body had "survived and played an important role," gamely noting the UN's ongoing "determination" to prevent war and to "invigorate the dialogue and partnership between all countries." In a manner utterly characteristic of the institution, it took 32 meetings for a committee to come up with this text, with its opaque bromides about "accelerating globalization and interdependence" and ensuring the "maximization of the benefits from and the minimization of the negative effects of" something or other.

As for the United States, whose brainchild the UN was, its press and politicians were equally restrained on the occasion, coupling dogged incantations of faith in the organization with an unmistakable underlying disenchantment. The *New York Times* commented: "Without significant changes in organization and behavior, the UN will lose its remaining effectiveness and public support." *Newsweek*: "No one loves the United Nations." *Time*: "How beautiful. How brave. How naive." Even President Clinton could come up with nothing better than: "The dreams of [the UN's] founders have not been fully realized, but its promise endures."

These pathetic encomia should be measured not only against the grand ambitions which attended the birth of the organization 50 years earlier but against the more chastened hopes of only five years ago. Jeane Kirkpatrick, a former U.S. ambassador to the world body, framed the question then by writing that with the end of the cold war, "we will finally see how useful the United Nations can be." Around the same time, the columnist Morton Kondracke, no starry-eyed romantic, observed that "the United Nations is suddenly alive again and doing useful work." And a report by the Bush administration declared that "the United Nations has been given a new lease on life, emerging as a central instrument for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace."

Soon a new Secretary General would turn these vague hopes into policy. The United Nations, declared Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was "suddenly at the center of international efforts to deal with unresolved problems of the past decades as well as an emerging array of present and future issues." He exhorted the member nations "to seize this extraordinary opportunity to expand, adapt, and reinvigorate the work of the United Nations." In particular, the new

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Secretary General proposed to activate long-moribund provisions of the UN Charter for a permanent military force to undertake missions more ambitious than traditional UN peacekeeping. These would include "peace-enforcement," "respond[ing] to outright aggression, imminent or actual," and even "preventive deployment" within wartorn countries "to alleviate suffering and to limit and control violence." The goal, said a spokesman, was to create a "Pax UN."

Boutros-Ghali's aspirations struck a responsive chord in Bill Clinton. During the 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton advocated establishing a "new voluntary UN rapid-deployment force." Once in office, he declared that "UN peacekeeping holds the promise to resolve many of this era's conflicts." For Clinton, the idea of a newly assertive UN was not only attractive in itself, it held the additional promise of alleviating America's international burdens and thereby leaving him free to focus on the domestic economy. As his ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, explained, "multilateral action" offered a "third alternative" between the two repugnant extremes of "self-absorption" and "hyperactivity," that is, between isolationism and playing the world's policeman.

But Clinton's wishful thinking and Boutros-Ghali's grand plans soon came a cropper in a string of debacles in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia.

IN HIS own final days in office, President Bush had dispatched American forces to Somalia under UN auspices to bring a halt to mass starvation by protecting the delivery of food and medicine. But Bush resisted pressures from Boutros-Ghali to take larger responsibility for the "reestablishment of national and regional institutions and civil administration in the entire country" (in the words of a Security Council resolution). When Bush left office, however, his successor proved much less resistant to Boutros-Ghali's plans. Months after the starvation had been ended, American troops were still in Somalia, working, as Ambassador Albright put it, to "help lift [Somalia] and its people from the category of a failed state into that of an emerging democracy." In that effort, a company of U.S. Army Rangers was wiped out in the streets of Mogadishu in October 1993, precipitating a hasty American departure and soon thereafter a termination of the UN mission.

The toll of the Somalia misadventure was to be counted not only in the lives of Americans but in the far more numerous lives of the Tutsi of Rwanda. There, six months later, in the clearest case of genocide since Hitler, a vast slaughter occurred which claimed a half million or more victims. Unlike the Holocaust, the genocide in Rwanda was carried out in full view—and yet, despite the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, the UN, having been burned in Somalia, simply stood by and watched.

Nay, it did worse. It so happened that a small UN military force was already stationed in Rwanda, the legacy of an earlier conflict. To this day its commander, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, insists that with 1,800 properly equipped men he could have stopped the slaughter. But when the bloodletting began, instead of sending reinforcements, the UN hastened to withdraw most of its forces after ten soldiers were killed trying to protect the moderate Hutu prime minister from Hutu extremists. Moreover, it now appears that UN superiors chose to ignore Dallaire's early intelligence of the genocidal plans of the extremists.

If the UN's debacles in Somalia and Rwanda were demonstrations, respectively, of naiveté and cowardice, its role in Bosnia was still more discreditable, for there it actively abetted the very same evil it officially exists to combat.

As the disintegration of Yugoslavia reached a climax in the summer of 1991, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo. The Western states that voted for the embargo, presumably failing to foresee its effect—namely, that it would work to cripple all but the Serbs—acted merely in a knee-jerk reflex. Then various Yugoslav republics, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, seceded, were granted diplomatic recognition, and were admitted to the UN as independent states. But despite the Charter's explicit affirmation of every member's "inherent right of . . . self-defense," Boutros-Ghali determined that the arms embargo on Yugoslavia should now apply to its successor states, and the Security Council concurred.

Having thus deprived the Bosnians of the means to defend themselves effectively, the UN assigned "peacekeepers" to facilitate the delivery of relief supplies. In mid-1993, the Security Council declared six cities in Bosnia to be "safe areas" to which Muslims fleeing "ethnic cleansing" might repair. Though the Security Council authorized the use of force in protection of these safe areas, the UN peacekeepers were allowed to fire only if they themselves were fired upon, not

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if the people under their putative protection were targeted. Thus, for the better part of a year, under the imperturbable eyes of the UN, Serbian snipers and artillery rained murder and mayhem on Sarajevo and the five other safe areas.

THERE IS little point in rehearsing the rest of the sorry story of the UN's engagement in Bosnia. Suffice it to say that in it the cowardice, buck-passing, and appeasement which have become the organization's hallmarks were brought to full fruition. It was, indeed, this universally perceived *moral* failure that may have accounted for the tepidness of the 50th-birthday wishes. It is also what renders inadequate the various proposals now being bandied about for structural reform of the institution.

To be sure, UN practices cry out for administrative reforms. But most of the nostrums now being pushed by various statesmen and blue-ribbon panels would only make matters worse. Thus, enlarging the Security Council would compound the UN's entropy. Giving it powers of taxation would compound its irresponsibility.

Even if the various proposed changes were meritorious, however, they would barely scratch the surface, for they are only procedural solutions to failings deeply substantive. In the area of human rights, for example, the world body has proved nothing short of a farce. Although membership on the Commission on Human Rights rotates, it invariably includes representatives of the most brutal governments on earth. At virtually every session, the Commission denounces human-rights violations in Israel, but it has never denounced them in Saudi Arabia. In 1995, it issued a scathing report exposing rife human-rights abuses in . . . the United States; it has never ordered a report on abuses in China.

Similarly, in its cherished field of "development," the world body has played a positively harmful role. It was the UN that in the 1950's and 1960's enshrined the now discredited theory of "dependency," the brainchild of the head of the UN Commission on Trade and Development. This theory taught third-world governments that to develop their industries they needed to protect them from foreign competition. Many heeded the call, and paid the price in decades of stagnation.

The UN's most profound failure, however, has been in the area of global security, the very reason for which it was brought into existence.

When a violation of the peace arises, the first response prescribed in the Charter is economic sanctions. These have been imposed five times, and in the words of Sir Anthony Parsons, a former British ambassador to the UN, "On all these occasions, albeit for different reasons in each case, they have proved ineffective."

When economic sanctions fail, the Charter envisions military action, as set forth in Articles 42 through 49. These articles provide for the creation of a Military Staff Committee to assist the Security Council in launching military action "to maintain or restore international peace and security." For this purpose, all member states undertake to make military units "available" to the Security Council "on its call."

Although the Military Staff Committee has indeed been brought into nominal existence, none of the other provisions has ever been acted upon. Again to quote Parsons, even in the case of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait "no serious attempt . . . was made to activate the Military Staff Committee . . . , still less to put Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm under the control of the Security Council. The United States and its allies were in effect given *carte blanche*." Parsons's point—a crucial one—is that this was no mere oversight:

> It is in fact hard to see how a large-scale, logistically complex and minutely planned operation such as Desert Storm could in practice have been organized by a committee . . . comprising American, Russian, Chinese, British, and French officers, while so diverse a body as the fifteen-member Security Council would have been hard put to it to "plan the application of armed force," even to maintain the minimum of military security required with Cuba and Yemen present at the table.

Useless when it comes to providing security, the UN can, it is true, sometimes serve a diplomatic function. Indeed, as the cold war ended, a variety of local conflicts were ripe for settlement in such places as Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia; in each of these, the UN served as mediator. And in cases where parties to a conflict have already agreed to a settlement, UN forces, even though they lack the capacity to compel compliance, can serve as observers or provide early warning.

Yet instances in which this has occurred or is likely to occur are few and far between. And as for UN mediation, the results of that in the last decade have been, as even so staunch an internationalist as Abba Eban has written, "relatively

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meager" when considered "against the more impressive achievements of conventional diplomacy" in the same period.

This record undermines the excuse proffered by defenders of the UN for its failures: namely, that they are the failures of its individual constituents. Even to the extent that this is true, it still begs the question of whether the organization brings out the best or the worst in its members. In fact, not only has the UN failed to promote beneficent action by individual states on the world stage, it has positively impeded or discouraged it. Absent the UN, for example, the American mission to rescue Somalia almost surely would have gone better, and it is also conceivable that more would have been done to halt the genocide in Rwanda, either by African states or by others. In Bosnia, there would have been no arms embargo tying the hands of the victims, and no one could have prevented U.S. or NATO air strikes to stop the shelling of civilian centers. Whether it was the Japanese diplomat Yasushi Akashi, the English general Michael Rose, or the French general Bernard Janvier, the most shameful roles in Bosnia were played by public servants wearing the colors of the UN.

THE UN was born in the late 1940's out of a recognition that the Allied nations had helped to bring on a global conflict by failing to respond in time to halt Nazi aggression. Through policies of shortsighted selfishness, they had contributed to what Churchill so memorably called "the unnecessary war." To prevent a recurrence, the doctrine of "collective security" became the central basis of the UN.

But this doctrine actually conflated two separable ideas. One was the "indivisibility of peace," i.e., that there is a universal interest in upholding a principled stand against aggression. The other was that the best way to stop aggression is by some mechanism of collective action.

But is it? Upon signing the UN Charter, President Truman declared: "If we had had this Charter a few years ago—and above all the will to use it—millions now dead would be alive." This statement, repeated in countless enthusiastic editorials, was true only in its reference to the element of will. For when the aggression that grew into World War II began, there already *was* a charter, not of the UN but of the League of Nations. It, too, was based on the theory of collective security. But when Japan attacked Manchuria in 1931, the League's response was to create a study commission, which after nearly a year's deliberation duly rebuked Japanese aggression. The only certifiable act that ensued was Japan's resignation from the League.

The League got a second chance in 1935, when Mussolini ordered his armies to conquer Abyssinia. The emperor, Haile Selassie, appealed for help, and the League declared Italy guilty of aggression, buttressing this with economic sanctions which, in the words of one historian, "were purposely designed to ensure their ineffectiveness." Four years later, the League expelled the Soviet Union for invading Finland, but again took no forceful action.

In sum, it would have been more accurate for Truman to say that "if we had had Churchill as Prime Minister of England a few years ago, millions now dead would be alive." Had Churchill been in power in 1935, when Hitler shredded the Treaty of Versailles and marched his unready armies into the Rhineland, England and France surely would have resisted—charter or no charter, League or no League, UN or no UN. And as we now know, if that had happened, the German armies would have turned back at once, conceivably leading to Hitler's downfall.

Similarly, in the 50 years since the UN's founding, the world has witnessed somewhere between one and two dozen cases of aggression. Twice the organization has embarked on "collective security": in Korea and Kuwait. Both actions were American-led and -organized, and Americans did most of the fighting; in both cases, America would have acted even in the absence of the UN, and many others would have joined in.

Trying to defend the UN against its record in Bosnia, the columnist Robert Wright has written: "collective security didn't fail in Bosnia; it was never tried." But there is no doubt that, in Bosnia as elsewhere, if the nations had united against aggression they would have prevailed. The question is whether the doctrine of collective security and the presence of the UN make such action by any of them more or less likely.

In the end, whatever useful function the United Nations may still perform—as a kind of salon for the exchange of ideas and information, perhaps, or as a place where America can round up a posse when necessary—the critical agency for securing peace in our time is not the UN but the U.S. To the degree the world organization feeds American illusions, or constrains American actions, it is less an asset to global security than a liability.

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MUSIC

Samuel Barber's Revenge

Terry Teachout

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-81) was the most successful of the American composers who came to prominence between the world wars. At a time when American music was regarded as box-office poison, his works were performed and recorded by such illustrious artists as the conductors Arturo Toscanini, Bruno Walter, Serge Koussevitzky, and Eugene Ormandy; the pianists Vladimir Horowitz and Van Cliburn; the violinist Isaac Stern; and the sopranos Leontyne Price and Eleanor Steber. The Metropolitan Opera commissioned and produced two full-length operas by Barber. And his *Adagio for Strings*, premiered in 1938 by Toscanini and the NBC Symphony, became—and remained—the most frequently played piece of orchestral music by an American composer besides George Gershwin.

Yet the critics had other ideas. Throughout Barber's career, the reviews of his music were, typically, not merely negative but contemptuously dismissive. In the 30's and 40's he was attacked for his musical elitism; in the 50's and 60's, for his refusal to experiment with serialism and other avant-garde techniques; at all times, for composing in a straightforward style. In the wake of the one great debacle of his professional life, the disastrous 1966 premiere of his opera *Antony and Cleopatra*, Barber's critical detractors finally got the upper hand, and thereafter he was treated by the American musical establishment—if not by performers and audiences—as a nonperson.

Since his death in 1981, Barber has been the object of something that could be called a rehabilitation. Virtually all of his music has been re-recorded by a new generation of admiring musicians—and, this time around, it has also been enthusiastically praised by a new generation of critics for whom serialism is of no more continuing interest than Marxism or Freudianism. This "revival," and the accompanying critical revaluation of Barber's work, is the final chapter in a story that tells much about the career of 20th-century American music and its advocates.

"I was supposed to be a doctor," Barber told an interviewer in 1978. "I was supposed to go to Princeton. And everything I was supposed to do I didn't." Viewed from one angle, Barber was indeed fully as rebellious as he imagined himself: born into upper-middle-class comfort in a suburb of Philadelphia, he became an artist and a practicing homosexual, and he lived in cosmopolitan circles far removed from the quiet gentility of West Chester, Pennsylvania. But viewed from another angle, he turned out much the way his family expected, and wished.

It is impossible to know whether Barber agonized over his homosexuality: a 1992 biography of him by Barbara Heyman glosses over the subject almost entirely. But he never made an issue of it in public, and, more significantly, his works are totally devoid of the confessional strain found in the music of other homosexual composers like Leonard Bernstein and Benjamin Britten. Similarly, Barber felt no need to rebel against the musical tradition into which he was born. He began composing at the age of seven, and his subsequent musical development was overseen by his

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aunt and uncle, both of whom had impeccable credentials. Louise Homer was one of the most celebrated American operatic singers of her day (she recorded with Enrico Caruso, Beniamino Gigli, and Giovanni Martinelli); Sidney, her husband, was a composer whose art songs, now forgotten, were widely performed in the early years of the century.

Barber's further musical education was as conservative as were the tastes of his mentors. While most American composers of the interwar period went to Europe to study with such progressive-minded teachers as Nadia Boulanger (a Stravinsky acolyte whose American students included Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Roy Harris, and Walter Piston), the fourteen-year-old Barber enrolled at the newly formed Curtis Institute of Music, a Philadelphia institution which from its earliest days specialized in the production of virtuoso instrumental soloists. At Curtis, Barber studied composition, piano, and voice, in time becoming sufficiently accomplished both to sing and to play his own music in public.[1]

He graduated from Curtis with a keenly honed technique, a solid working knowledge of the practical problems of vocal and instrumental performance, and a predisposition toward conventional forms of musical expression. The last of these was reinforced by Sidney Homer, who from the beginning encouraged his talented nephew to ignore fashion and follow his own musical taste. "Opinions don't change a note or add to your stature," he wrote to Barber in 1929. "The only thing to do is to get down to brass tacks and fight the thing out on your own line, doing, as nearly as you can, that thing that you know you want to do."

Barber took his uncle's advice to heart. "I myself wrote always as I wished," he said toward the end of his life." And what he wanted was to write strongly personal music that took little note of contemporary trends in composition.

AS A composer, Barber's most singular trait was the ability to write memorable melodies. The main theme of the beloved *Adagio for Strings* is typical: a long, precisely balanced arch of minor-key melody (most of Barber's compositions are in minor keys), accompanied by unambiguously tonal harmonies which arise not from chordal manipulation but from clear, contrapuntally sound writing. This kind of thematic material was rare in classical music *circa* 1938—in general, the modernists were more interested in harmony and rhythm than in melody—but Barber had an exceptional melodic gift, and reveled in it. He is, in fact, the only important American composer of his time whose music could be called "tuneful," a word whose quaintness suggests the extent to which Barber was out of step with his peers.

As for the musical structures he favored, these are both conventional in form and modest in scale. Even his longer compositions are cast in recognizable variants of the sonata form and take about a half-hour to perform, the length of a symphony by Mozart or Haydn—or Mendelssohn, the 19th-century composer Barber most closely resembles.

To be sure, Barber's is the work of a 20th-century composer, not a nostalgic *pasticheur*. But if there is nothing specifically derivative about his musical language, there is also nothing experimental about it. It is characteristic that Barber had no use for the visionary but technically slapdash music of his fellow American composer, Charles Ives, whom he described as "an amateur, a hack, who didn't put pieces together well." Barber also lacked the populist inclinations (and the left-wing ideology) of a socially conscious composer like Aaron Copland: none of his major works incorporates folk melodies or rhythmic devices derived from any kind of popular music, American or otherwise.

Far from being a populist, Barber was an old-fashioned Romantic with a decidedly Wertherian streak: the vast majority of his pieces can be interpreted as musical portraits of a sensitive artist pitted, like Goethe's hero in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, in solitary battle against a hostile world. (His two most revealing titles are "Hermit Songs" and "Music for a Scene from Shelley.") Much of his output consists of solo songs, and most of his instrumental works are concertos, solo sonatas, or orchestral pieces whose titles emphasize the intense subjectivity that is central to his musical persona.

It is this self-absorption, indeed, which explains the otherwise surprising fact that Barber's two operas, *Vanessa* (1958) and *Antony and Cleopatra*, despite moments of great beauty, are theatrically ineffective. Opera, like the novel, demands from its practitioners a passionate interest in the diversity of human character, and an ability to suggest this diversity through music. Barber, by contrast, was interested only in himself, and his musical style was too narrowly focused to bring a cast of varied personalities to convincing life. His only successful stage work, indeed, was *Cave of the Heart*, a ballet score composed in 1946 for Martha Graham, another hyper-romantic solipsist whose dances, whatever the size of the cast, were for all intents and purposes one-woman shows.

THESE QUALITIES made for a style that cut squarely against the grain

[1] As a singer, Barber made the first recording of "Dover Beach" (1931), his setting for baritone and string quartet of Matthew Arnold's poem; as a pianist, he accompanied Leontyne Price in the first recording of "Hermit Songs," the 1953 song cycle that is the finest of his many outstanding contributions to the American art-song repertory (the latter performance is currently available on Sony MPK-46727).

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of American musical culture in the 30's and 40's, the years when Barber first won fame. Young American composers and critics of the period, influenced by the twin ideals of Igor Stravinsky's austere neoclassicism and Paul Hindemith's communitarian concept of "useful" music—not to mention the collectivist political views held by Copland and his circle—found Barber's romantic outlook alien in the extreme.

Compounding the problem was the fact that Barber's success was both immediate and, for an American composer, all but unprecedented. In 1935, his music was played by the New York Philharmonic, broadcast nationally by NBC, and recorded by RCA Victor; three years later, Toscanini and the NBC Symphony premiered his *Adagio for Strings* and *First Essay* for orchestra. By the age of twenty-eight, Barber had become America's best-known classical composer, as well as one of the few who earned a living from composition alone.

That so politically and aesthetically incorrect a figure readily found favor with performers—and, worse yet, audiences—was, predictably enough, the cause of widespread outrage. As early as 1936, Aaron Copland, normally a perceptive and generous critic, said of his younger colleague:

> Barber writes in a somewhat outmoded fashion, making up in technical finish what he lacks in musical substance. So excellent a craftsman should not content himself forever with the emotionally conventional context of his present manner.

Two years later, the *Adagio for Strings* premiere inspired one angry listener to send a letter to the *New York Times*:

> One listened in vain for evidence of youthful vigor, freshness, or fire, for use of a contemporary idiom (which was characteristic of every composer whose works have withstood the vicissitudes of time). Mr. Barber's was "authentic," dull, "serious" music—utterly anachronistic as the utterance of a young man of twenty-eight, A.D. 1938! Such a choice by the great musical Messiah in our midst [i.e., Toscanini] can only have a retarding influence on the advance of our creative musicians.

The author of this letter, Ashley Pettis, had a hidden agenda: he was a member of the Copland circle, and wrote about music for the *New Masses*, the Communist-party weekly. But the publication of Pettis's letter by the *Times* marked the onset of a tide: for the rest of Barber's life, a steadily growing number of critics would write about him in similar terms. If some damned him with faint praise (Virgil Thomson called him "simply an academic" of "the gentle sweet-singing sort"), others were more direct in their dismissiveness. But all agreed that Barber was not to be taken seriously.

In public, Barber usually spoke lightly of his reputation as a musical middlebrow, but an occasional waspish remark revealed the hurt that lay beneath. "I've had little success in intellectual circles," he told an interviewer in 1971. "I'm not talked about in the *New York Review of Books*, and I was never part of the Stravinsky 'inner circle.' In Aaron Copland's book . . . my name appears in a footnote."

He may also have taken some of his critics' strictures to heart. Several of his postwar works, in particular *Cave of the Heart*, the Cello Concerto (1945), and the Piano Sonata (written in 1949 for Vladimir Horowitz), make effective use of a considerably knottier harmonic idiom than his usual fare, while *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* (1947), an exquisite setting of a prose poem by James Agee, bears the unexpected stamp of Copland's middle-period "Americana" style. Still, at no time did Barber seriously consider converting to serialism (as did Copland), and even his most "difficult" later scores are as accessible—and distinctive—as any of his prewar pieces.

His fundamental unwillingness to play the American-music game caught up with Barber in 1966, when the Metropolitan Opera opened its new house at Lincoln Center with the premiere of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The failure of this opera—the reviews were unanimously unfavorable, and the work itself subsequently disappeared without a trace—had a devastating effect on Barber's self-regard. In 1973, he sold the New York country house he had shared for 30 years with Gian Carlo Menotti, the composer of the popular operas *The Medium* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. (Barber and Menotti met as students at Curtis in 1928, and thereafter not only lived together for much of their lives but collaborated closely.) Barber completed only one more large-scale work: *The Lovers* (1971), a cantata for baritone, chorus, and orchestra based on poems by Pablo Neruda. Instead of composing, he spent the last years of his life drinking to excess, coddling his resentments, and studying yoga.

Was Samuel Barber a major composer? The answer depends on how rigidly the term is defined. The fact that he worked within a comparatively narrow compass necessarily excludes him from the first rank of Western composers: he is no Schubert or Bartók. But within the limits imposed by his taste and temperament, Barber's mastery was complete, which at the very least places him on the level of such second-tier Romantic and neo-Romantic masters as Mendelssohn, Hugo Wolf, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Francis Poulenc, and William Walton—surely no small achievement.

Will his music live? To some extent, this question has already

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been answered. Barber's music has been performed regularly ever since his Op. 1, a serenade for string quartet, was premiered in 1930, and he is at present more popular than ever. Presumably this popularity will fluctuate in years to come, but it seems likely that the melancholy lyricism and emotional frankness of his finest scores will continue to give pleasure to listeners—just as his consummate craftsmanship will make those scores appealing to virtuoso performers.

These qualities can be heard in the many first-rate recordings of Barber's music that have appeared in recent years. Perhaps the most important of these is *Secrets of the Old*, a collection of all the songs Barber published during his lifetime (plus ten additional songs, dating from the 20's and early 30's, which did not see print until 1994), sung by the soprano Cheryl Studer and the baritone Thomas Hampson, and accompanied by the pianist John Browning and the Emerson String Quartet.[2] Browning, a superbly gifted American pianist who knew Barber well, has made two other invaluable recordings of his music, a single CD of the complete solo piano music and a riveting performance of the Piano Concerto (which Barber wrote for Browning in 1962) accompanied by Leonard Slatkin and the St. Louis Symphony. This last recording is itself part of an invaluable three-disc series conducted by Slatkin of Barber's orchestral music, which also contains, among other things, *Adagio for Strings*, the three orchestral *Essays* (1937, 1942, and 1978), the concertos for violin (1939) and cello, and "Medea's Dance of Vengeance," a scene for orchestra drawn from *Cave of the Heart*.[3] These performances are in line with Slatkin's own longstanding commitment, both in the recording studio and in concert, to American music.

No less committed is the much-admired American soprano Dawn Upshaw, who in 1988 made the most compelling of the many recordings of *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* that have been released since Barber's death.[4] And for anyone interested in exploring Barber's less well-known scores, his two large-scale choral works, *The Lovers* and *Prayers of Kierkegaard* (1954), were recorded in 1991 at a series of public performances by the late Andrew Schenck and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.[5]

The hundreds of recordings of Barber's music currently available on CD remind us that only one thing can make a classical composer successful: the unforced admiration of audiences. In the long run, promotion, no matter how aggressive, is not enough; immaculately correct politics (or aesthetics) are not enough; even good reviews are not enough. Ultimately, success is awarded solely on the basis of the "votes" of hundreds of thousands of listeners, who make up their own minds in their own ways. They may be wrong, but they cannot be bought, bossed, or intimidated.

This is hardly to say that every famous composer deserves his reputation, or that gifted composers invariably rise to the top. But in the long run, and far more often than not, rough justice is done. Those who reflexively decry the effects of the market on high culture would do well to keep the case of Samuel Barber firmly in mind.

[2] DGG 435 867-2GH2 (two CD's).

[3] The piano CD is MusicMasters 01612-67122-2. The concerto is on RCA Victor Red Seal 60732-2-RC. The other two discs are EMI CDC 49463 and RCA Victor Red Seal 09026-68283-2.

[4] Elektra Nonesuch 79187-2.

[5] Koch International 3-7125-2H1.

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Books in Review

The Sexual Devolution

Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life: How Today's Feminist Elite Has Lost Touch with the Real Concerns of Women

by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

Doubleday. 275 pp. $23.95

Reviewed by
Elizabeth Kristol

ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE'S feminist credentials are impeccable. She was an early organizer of women's consciousness-raising groups; a scholar in the newly emerging field of women's history; and the founder of the influential women's-studies program at Emory University. In recent years, though, she has become an outspoken critic of feminism. Her latest book shows just how far she has moved: although she speaks as if she were reforming feminism from within, she has actually renounced almost all of its most pivotal ideas.

In her preface, Fox-Genovese explains that she wrote this book in order to answer a question that has troubled her: why have growing numbers of women, including many of her own students, become uneasy identifying themselves as feminists? Her answer is spelled out in the book's title: feminism has lost touch with the concerns of ordinary women and is no longer relevant to their lives.

In some ways this thesis is a continuation of themes raised in Fox-Genovese's 1991 book, *Feminism Without Illusions*. But where that book was dense and scholarly—as likely to invoke Hegel as Betty Friedan—this one is deliberately popular, and is peppered with material from personal interviews and poll data. These she employs to illustrate her central proposition that feminism has run aground in the sexual revolution it did so much to launch.

Feminists, in Fox-Genovese's telling, sought to establish equality between the sexes by achieving *sexual* equality between the sexes. To that end, they preached against the shackles of morality that had restricted women's sexual conduct. The preaching did not fall on deaf ears; feminism succeeded to a remarkable degree in creating a new moral universe in which sex has been entirely separated from morality.

This transformation has had wide-ranging effects. During the 60's and 70's, not only sex itself but everything having to do with sex—marriage and divorce, illegitimacy, abortion—became immune from moral judgment; and moral judgment itself was reduced to the status of purely personal choice and belief. About these sweeping changes Fox-Genovese has a decidedly glum view: "How a society—any society—can survive without at least a minimal moral standard remains obscure."

In fact, as she points out, our society has not survived very well at all. While upper-middle-class feminists were celebrating sexual freedom, they turned a blind eye to the emotional and economic suffering that so many women experienced as a result of the change in mores. In particular, Fox-Genovese stresses the tragic consequences of the sexual revolution for poor women (and ultimately

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their children as well), for whom marriage and strong families have always been the sturdiest bulwarks against utter immiseration, and for whom sexual "liberation" has brought not freedom but dependency, abandonment, and abuse.

In tracing how this state of affairs came to pass, Fox-Genovese assigns a preeminent place to feminism's battle for abortion on demand, an issue she describes as a "litmus test" for being a true feminist. More than anything else, the easy availability of abortion severs the link between sex and procreation. It was, therefore, central in the battle to achieve sexual parity with men, and, Fox-Genovese reports, the Supreme Court's decision to legalize abortion in *Roe* v. *Wade* was hailed by many feminists "as nothing less than women's own Declaration of Independence."

But once again Fox-Genovese demurs from the feminist position. She dismisses abortion-rights advocates who assert "with astonishing presumption, and no less astonishing absurdity, that no self-respecting baby would want to be born deformed or poor." And she rejects the belief that a political solution to the abortion wars should be arrived at on the basis of "a woman's right to choose." "[W]e do not," she writes, "normally regard the taking of a human life as a mere matter of personal preference."

ALL THIS amounts to a scathing and heretical critique. Yet, despite the power of its indictment, *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life* is a work plagued by ambivalence. At one moment, Fox-Genovese seems on the verge of renouncing feminism altogether. In the next, she is intent on resurrecting it in what she calls a "family-friendly" form. Having meticulously established the link between feminism and the sexual revolution, having spelled out the pernicious social and economic consequences of that revolution, and having bewailed the moral chaos resulting from the abandonment of common moral standards, Fox-Genovese seems abruptly and repeatedly to recoil from the implications of her own words.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the hasty retreat she beats on abortion. "Our society must reconcile acceptance of early abortions," she concludes, "with time-honored moral standards, most notably respect for human life." Fox-Genovese offers no explanation for this (guardedly) pro-choice stance, but it seems utterly at odds with arguments she has already advanced and endorsed.

The inquiry that lies at the heart of this book—determining why so many women reject the feminist label—may itself be a reflection of intellectual confusion. Even from the evidence Fox-Genovese has collected—interviews with ordinary people who do not dwell in the cloister of the women's-studies world—it appears that women can get by perfectly well without having to call themselves feminists, let alone immerse themselves in feminist ideology.

Fox-Genovese occasionally recognizes this fact. Recounting how two of her interviewees stood up to abusive husbands, she concludes: "they have not needed feminism to tell them that lines must be drawn." More often than not, however, she clings to the belief that women do require an ideological framework to give them guidance and self-worth. Thus, she tells of a pregnant reporter who attended a conference of the National Organization for Women and was dismayed to find only one panel discussion that focused on child-rearing—and that was for lesbian mothers. "Here was a young woman of about thirty," laments Fox-Genovese,

> who was successfully pursuing a career and loving it and about to have a child she expected to love. Where did she turn for a story that would capture her life and help her to live it more easily?

If truth be told, most people are perfectly capable of defining their lives in their own terms—by the churches and synagogues they belong to, the people they keep company with, the schools they choose for their children, the books they read, the movies they see. It may be that only someone steeped in the rhetoric of the women's-history discipline—with its insistence on the importance of telling "women's story"—would expect an ordinary person to be searching for a "story" to offer an overarching account of her life. Fox-Genovese's curious blindness to this point may say less about the current state of feminism than about her own attachment to an ideology—even one that may no longer tell the story of *her* life.

A Guilty Conscience?

Albert Speer:
His Battle with Truth
by Gitta Sereny
Knopf. 757 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Robert S. Wistrich

ALBERT SPEER was the epitome of the intelligent technocrat who loyally serves a totalitarian regime. As Hitler's relentlessly efficient Minister for Armaments and War Production from 1942 through 1945, he greatly helped the German military machine prolong World War II. Despite his relative youth—Speer was then in his late thirties—his accomplishments in the service of the Third Reich made him, for a time, its

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second most important official and the Fuehrer's potential successor.

During the final stages of the war, Speer became increasingly disillusioned with Hitler's policy of "victory or annihilation," and he tried to protect German industry from orders to destroy it in all areas threatened by the advancing Allied armies. But Speer remained faithful enough to the dictator not to join the anti-Hitler plot of July 1944; indeed, he appears to have been involved in its suppression.

At Nuremberg in 1946, Speer was put on trial for participation in war crimes, and particularly for the exploitation, in atrocious conditions, of over four million slave laborers—mainly Slav prisoners from the East. Convicted, Speer was sentenced to only twenty years in prison, even as his deputy, Fritz Sauckel, who had acted on his orders, was hanged. What saved Speer from execution were his apparent contrition, his willingness to cooperate with his Western captors, and also his cleverness and composure. All these attributes were on display at Nuremberg, where he stood out among the 21 defendants for his reasoned confession of guilt (even as he pleaded not guilty in the proceedings).

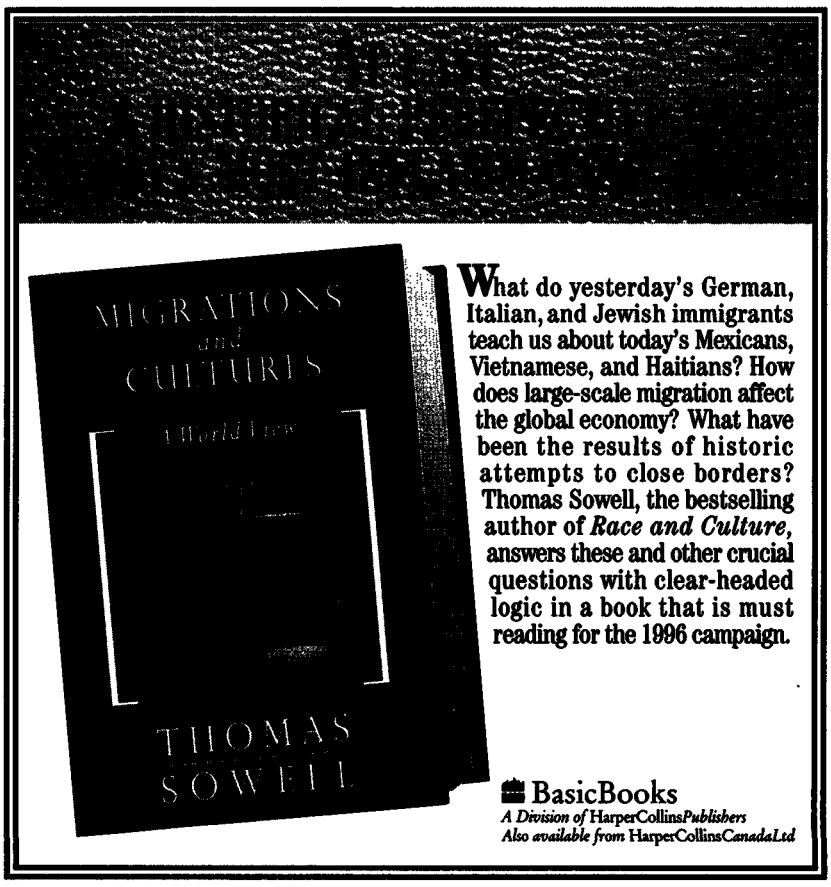
The qualities of mind exhibited by Speer at Nuremberg also appear to have partly inspired Gitta Sereny's monumental biography, a work based on long interviews with him in the last four years of his life—he died in 1981—as well as the reminiscences of his family members, friends and former colleagues, and archival documentation. Sereny is an experienced London-based journalist who has previously written a valuable book on the mass murderer, Franz Stangl, the commandant of the Treblinka death camp, aptly titled *Into that Darkness*.

Speer, with his personal charm, suavity, reflectiveness, and extraordinary self-control, clearly presented a very different kind of challenge to a biographer. For one thing, Speer himself had already written a best-selling account of his years with Hitler, *Inside the Third Reich*. This book, which offered what is still the most persuasive account of the Nazi regime as seen from the inside by a leading participant, was also misleading and inaccurate.* In particular, Speer was notably evasive about the Holocaust and about his own personal responsibility for Nazi war crimes. Though he may not have known about the gas chambers before 1945, his claim that he was ignorant about what was taking place in the East never rang true.

Indeed, Sereny's account is in large measure devoted to presenting a more accurate picture of Speer's role in the Nazi horrors. Yet, despite the many pages she devotes to what the "Jewish Question" actually meant to Speer, both during and after the war, in the end his view still remains rather obscure. Speer himself was clearly never a vulgar anti-Semite (he was much too refined for that), although at one telling moment during an interview in the late 1970's, he confesses to Sereny that "I really had no aversion to them [the Jews], or rather, no more than the slight discomfort all of us sometimes feel when in contact with them." But Sereny fails to extract from Speer any coherent judgment either about the source of Hitler's obsession with the Jews or about the anti-Semitic campaigns waged against them in Nazi Germany.

One reason for this shortcoming is that Sereny simply does not confront Speer head-on. Instead, she conducts what is largely a psychological inquest into how Speer "blocked" from his mind the terrible knowledge of the Holocaust and how this act of suppression

*See Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "In Hitler's Service," COMMENTARY, November 1970.


MIGRATIONS and CULTURES
THOMAS SOWELL
What do yesterday's German, Italian, and Jewish immigrants teach us about today's Mexicans, Vietnamese, and Haitians? How does large-scale migration affect the global economy? What have been the results of historic attempts to close borders? Thomas Sowell, the bestselling author of Race and Culture, answers these and other crucial questions with clear-headed logic in a book that is must reading for the 1996 campaign.
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then produced deep feelings of guilt. As a result, we learn from Sereny's biography a lot more about Speer the private man than about the public figure or about the structures within which he exercised his authority. And even within these terms, an intelligible portrait does not emerge with real clarity. Despite his painful efforts at honesty, Speer—civilized, cerebral, emotionally deprived, almost asexual—simply does not seem capable of truly revealing himself.

Where Sereny does succeed in considerable measure is in conveying the intensity and the complexity of the Platonic love affair that existed between Speer and Hitler. Here, it seems to me, Sereny could have made much more of Speer's role in constructing the Nazi aesthetic. He had, after all, begun his career as an architect, and the inventive lighting effects, designs, and decorations with which he enhanced Nazi rallies were what initially impressed Hitler about him. Hitler found in Speer what he needed: an energetic young man with exceptional organizational ability who could translate the Fuehrer's grandiose vision of the Germanic Reich into architectural reality. And Speer found in Hitler a man he could admire, and who indeed seems to have cast a hypnotic spell on him.

In the end, however, it was Hitler's and Speer's shared flair for the visual (more than any latent erotic charge, as some have suggested) that brought them together in a common enthusiasm. All the more regrettable, then, that we never learn from this book how Hitler actually viewed the relation among art, ideology, and politics. Sereny does not appear interested enough to draw Speer out on this theme—or, for that matter, on Speer's own relationship to Nazi ideology and to Hitler's fantastic visions of the totalitarian future.

AT THE heart of Sereny's biography is the contention that Speer ultimately succeeded in transforming himself during his two decades in Spandau prison and in the years after his release, undergoing a kind of moral education that slowly led him to accept personal responsibility for Nazi crimes. Yet it is precisely this claim, for which we may perhaps never have more evidence than is available here, that seems to me the most problematic of all. Speer essentially admits that he looked away, and thereby tacitly accepted the persecution and murder of Jews. But he does not say he knew there was a plan to murder all the Jews of Europe, a plan which was being implemented at the very moment he was closest to Hitler and at the peak of his own power. Nor does he express any real moral responsibility for the killings and starvation of millions of Slavs, Gypsies, foreign workers, and others over whom he exercised so much power so cruelly.

In short, Speer's confession of guilt at the end of Sereny's compelling and highly readable book is a partial one. He may have been more honest than other ex-Nazis and indeed most Germans of his generation in acknowledging what he did, but one may be permitted to doubt Sereny's conclusion that he won his battle for truth.

Holding the Center

Values Matter Most
by Ben J. Wattenberg
Free Press. 426 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Richard Brookhiser

AS THIS book was going to press in October 1995, its author—a columnist, a pollster, and a sometime speechwriter for such national Democratic leaders as Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, and Henry "Scoop" Jackson—received a late-night phone call from still another Democrat, Bill Clinton. The President had received a copy of the page proofs and, in response, now confessed to Wattenberg that in his first two years in office he had "lost the language" of values, and thereby "let Democrats down." Wattenberg, reporting the conversation in his newspaper column, concluded that while the President's second thoughts would "cause fresh credibility problems," they represented "the right path for the country."

Clinton's unbosoming certainly helped, however briefly, to call attention to this book, and to Wattenberg's cause. For the past 25 years, he has devoted a good part of his professional energies to tracking the concerns of the center of the electorate, and has watched with dismay as "his" Democratic party, increasingly elitist, pessimistic, and ideological, has moved to the left of it. Wattenberg is also a long-time proponent of the idea that the "values issue" is a greater worry to the average voter than is the state of the economy.

Wattenberg divides the values issue into two classes: "cultural" and "social." Cultural issues, such as abortion and school prayer, are essentially sectarianizing in nature and therefore, he argues, have no simple political solution. He counsels politicians to leave them on the back burner. A social issue, by contrast—Wattenberg puts crime, welfare, education, and quotas in this category—elicits a broad consensus regarding its importance to society as a whole, and can be addressed by government policies of one stripe or another.

As Wattenberg sees it, the problem common to the four main social issues is that some people are being given (in candidate Clinton's 1992 phrase) "something for noth-

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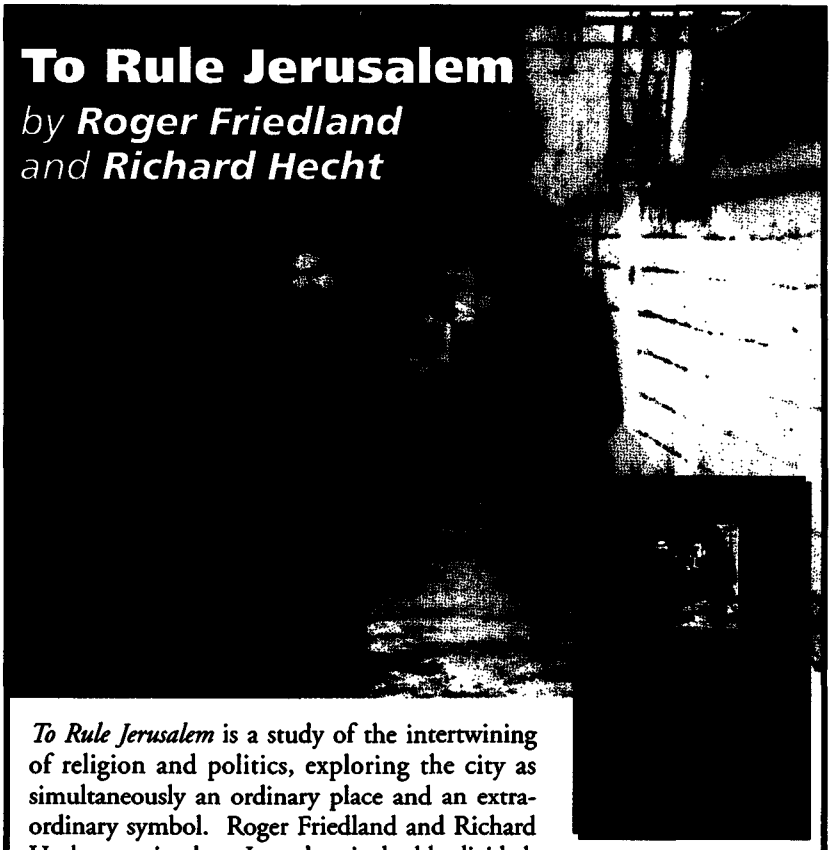
ing." Criminals get away too easily with crime, and welfare recipients spend too much time on the dole. Public schools promote students automatically, and award meaningless diplomas. Blacks (Wattenberg is notably blunt in naming races) get special preferences.

Since the Nixon-McGovern race of 1972, writes Wattenberg, Republicans on the whole have had a better grasp of the social issues than have Democrats. But then, in 1992, the Democrats nominated Bill Clinton, who supported the death penalty, promised to end welfare "as we know it," and, as governor of Arkansas, boasted a record as a proponent of educational standards. Racial issues were the one area in which candidate Clinton sent mixed signals: he supported affirmative action, but he also criticized the anti-white rapper Sister Souljah. Meanwhile, the Republicans renominated George Bush at a convention which the media successfully portrayed as a carnival of cultural bigotry. The result was that Clinton won the battle for the values issue, and hence the election.

Once Clinton was in the White House, however, something went wrong. According to Wattenberg, his administration expended its political capital on the 1993 budget battle, NAFTA, and health-care reform. When Clinton did tackle a social issue he bungled the job, as in his weak crime bill or in his nomination of true believers in affirmative action to the Justice Department. In Wattenberg's judgment, it was this failure by Clinton to govern as he had campaigned that helped the Republicans gain control of Congress in 1994, and that at the time of this book's publication looked to threaten the President's reelection prospects in 1996.

Wattenberg's belief in the political paramountcy of values issues is hardly eccentric; over the last 30 years a host of thinkers and politicians have espoused the same view. That Clinton understands their potency was underscored in his 1996 State of the Union address. Unfortunately, however, many of the conclusions Wattenberg draws from his own analysis are less than persuasive.

For one thing, he cavalierly dismisses the political significance of economic performance. This, he writes, "is the snake-oil issue, the smoke-and-mirrors issue." But stagflation and the tax revolt were a key element in Ronald Reagan's first victory in 1980, while the budget deal of 1990, in which George Bush broke his pledge not to raise taxes, was arguably the most important factor in his subse-



To Rule Jerusalem is a study of the intertwining of religion and politics, exploring the city as simultaneously an ordinary place and an extraordinary symbol. Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht examine how Jerusalem is doubly divided, on the one hand between Israelis and Palestinians, each of whom ground their national identities in the city, as well as within each nation between those who put primacy in the democratic decisions of their nations and those who would yield to a higher divine law. They explore how Jerusalem has figured as a battleground in conflicts over the relation between Zionism and Judaism and between Palestinian nationalism and Islam. Based on hundreds of interviews with powerful players and ordinary citizens over the course of a decade, this book evokes the ways in which these conflicts are experienced and managed in the life of the city.

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quent defeat. That economic worries continue to have a powerful influence on voter behavior has been evidenced again in the unexpected successes of Steve Forbes and Patrick J. Buchanan in the early Republican primaries. (The flat tax and protectionism may be leaves from different economic texts, but they are economic issues all the same.)

Then, too, Wattenberg glides too quickly over the class of issues he dubs "cultural," and on which he claims there is no consensus. "Remember the flap about Murphy Brown?" he asks, referring to the TV show whose eponymous heroine decided to bear an illegitimate child, and which was then criticized by Vice President Dan Quayle. According to Wattenberg, liberals thought the whole incident was "positively trivial. Many conservatives thought otherwise"—in other words, no consensus. But the "flap about Murphy Brown" was in fact about bastardy, a key symptom of the welfare system Wattenberg himself deplores. Dan Quayle was right to raise the point, as even President Clinton has conceded.

Although Wattenberg does not seem to care for issues that are configured in cultural terms, the outcome of battles over social issues often hinges on them: for that reason alone, it is a mistake to ignore or to deprecate them. Lenient sentencing of criminals, for example, has been the object of voter resentment for three decades, and yet it continues unabated. The reason is an insular judicial system that encourages the practice, and that is (so far) beyond the reach of political remedy. But the first way to fight culture is through culture. Long before the poll numbers can effect a change, the ground has to be prepared. That, after all, is the function of leadership.

FOR ALL his charm and energy and decisiveness, Wattenberg has a long record of being taken in by leaders talking his language of consensus and values. In 1976, although he initially supported the conservative Democrat Henry Jackson, he was nevertheless gratified by the victory of Jimmy Carter, who was then (as he writes) "seen as a social moderate." Wattenberg's enthusiasm turned sour, however, when the ranks of the Carter administration came to be filled not by "moderate technocrats" but by "left-wing ideologues." The pattern repeated itself sixteen years later, when Wattenberg endorsed Clinton. "Clinton," he wrote in an October 1992 column, "is running as a 'different Democrat.' I'm nervous about it, but I trust he will govern that way." Yet, once again, the administration silted up with ideologues.

The lesson, clearly, is that it is not enough merely to speak the language of values; for many politicians, including the "centrists" Wattenberg has backed over the years, speaking in that particular tongue is just another way to generate good spin. It is a pity that Ben Wattenberg, for all his manifest strengths as a political analyst, should allow himself to be so easily spun.

Social Gospel

In the Beauty of the Lilies
by John Updike
Knopf. 491 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
J. Bottum

WITH EACH new and beautifully written book, the significance of John Updike seems to fade further. The sixty-three-year-old novelist's latest work, *In the Beauty of the Lilies*, spans eight decades, and on this (for Updike) unusually broad canvas it paints a portrait of four generations of an American family and their struggles with the decline of religion. The story is perhaps a little sketchy, as though the book were an abstract for a novel rather than the finished thing, but it is a thoughtful and serious book, in places funny and in places sad, by a thoughtful and serious man, the prose master of his generation. The problem is that it just does not seem to matter.

Drawing its title from the last verse of the "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," *In the Beauty of the Lilies* opens with a scene of the movie actress Mary Pickford fainting in the heat of a 1910 spring day in Paterson, New Jersey, while filming D.W. Griffith's *A Call to Arms*. This brief vignette is, literally and symbolically, the spring of all the ensuing action:

> At the moment when Mary Pickford fainted, the Rev. Clarence Arthur Wilmot, down in the rectory of the Fourth Presbyterian Church at the corner of Straight Street and Broadway, felt the last particles of his faith leave him. The sensation was distinct—a visceral surrender, a set of dark sparkling bubbles escaping upward.

Clarence's loss of faith and subsequent resignation from his ministry tumbles the family into a financial ruin from which they do not recover for two generations. Faced with his wife's bitter incomprehension—"Stop this tedious mooning about faith!"—and reduced to selling second-rate encyclopedias door to door, the former Reverend Wilmot finds his only relief in watching movies. Thus the thematic link to Mary Pickford: in America, the theater has replaced the church, the never-never land of Hollywood's happy endings has replaced the hope of a Christian heaven, and the movie goer's passive suspension of disbe-

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lief has replaced the religious believer's active embrace of faith.

The tides of 20th-century history wash around and sometimes over the Wilmots' story. As this main-line Protestant family slides down the social ladder, the rest of America, including the immigrant Italians, Irish, and Jews—even the minister's former servants—are on the rise. To Americans at large the only faith that seems worth having is not the faith of their fathers but a bouncy, vulgar adoration of what William James called the "bitch-goddess SUCCESS." At times, this new American faith seems allied, in Updike's telling, to the bluff, no-nonsense atheism found in the anti-Christian tracts of Clarence Darrow and Robert Ingersoll. More often, it binds with the easy-going brand of Protestantism which finds perfect expression in Hollywood's happy tales of virtue and hard work rewarded by social and economic advancement.

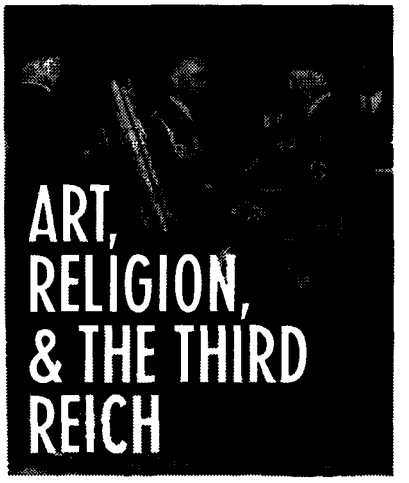
WITH CLARENCE'S death and the coming of the Depression, the family moves from New Jersey to a small town in Delaware. Though the elder son, the brash Jared, embraces the American push for success, it is the life of the younger son, the retiring Teddy, that mainly occupies the quiet second section of *In the Beauty of the Lilies*. A seemingly weak man whose most forceful characteristic is a hatred of organized religion—he blames it for destroying his father's life—Teddy summons the strength to abandon his floundering career in the big city for the serene rhythms of a small-town life. Discerning the overlooked beauty in a lame village girl, he marries the club-footed Emily and becomes a local mailman.

And yet from Teddy and Emily comes a dynamo. In their daughter Essie, three distinctly American furies—pushy vulgarity, feel-good Christianity, and the movies—unite to shower a golden child with gifts. Updike has always had a very delicate feel for the social distinctions that once prevailed among the various Protestant sects; it is in her grandfather's lost middle-class Presbyterianism that Essie finds exactly the combination of faith and works—of certainty in an unearned salvation and need for an earned triumph—to drive her from failure in a Delaware beauty contest to major stardom in Hollywood. "I'm a Presbyterian," she tells the movie mogul King Cohn while vamping through a contract negotiation laced with sexual innuendo. "I bet you are, baby," he answers. "Well, whatever gets you through the tough spots."

Essie never really faces any tough spots, however: the third section of *In the Beauty of the Lilies* tracks her triumphant career as a Hollywood screen goddess, America's substitute for the lost God of Christian faith. But then, in the fourth section, the same American furies who combined to bless the child combine again to curse *her* child, Clark, a casual afterthought of one of her failed marriages. Neglected by his mother, born to an eminence he has not earned and a privilege he cannot exercise, Clark wanders America in search of something his family has lacked since his great-grandfather's apostasy.

Fatefully, he finds it in a Seventh-Day-Adventist-style radical Christian cult reminiscent of the Branch Davidians. "I am the only person you will meet who is not interested in your mother," Jessie Smith, a David Koresh lookalike, tells him. "I am interested in you." Soon the novel, as if to suggest that the willed falsity comprising religion today can only culminate in violence, moves to its inevitable fiery conclusion.

But when Smith, in preparation for his own death, begins to murder the women in the besieged cult's compound, Clark is given one last chance for redemptive action. Reenacting the same moral impulse that compelled his great-



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grandfather to resign his ministry rather than preach without faith—an impulse now filtered through innumerable cinematic images of the heroic loner—he draws his pistol and, before being shot down himself, kills Smith and chases the screaming women and children out into the arms of the police.

FROM HIS first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959), through his celebrated quartet about "Rabbit" Angstrom, John Updike has shown himself a writer of many virtues, and they are all on display in this book. Perhaps first among them is his seemingly endless capacity to forge gorgeous metaphors, set so effortlessly into his prose that they never seem labored. Thus, the edge of pain felt by the dying Clark is calmly likened to "the crinkly orange margin that consumes the paper of a cigarette in advance of the growing tobacco ash"; the snick of a cocking gun is casually compared to a teacup settling on a saucer, or the breaking of a twig.

Updike has always displayed, as well, a refreshing curiosity about the lives of real people, straight across the social and cultural spectrum: the high-school sports star and the Cadillac dealer no less than the academic theologian and the pubescent hippie. *In the Beauty of the Lilies* gives us, in depth, a Presbyterian minister, a mailman, a movie star, a rootless son of the new rich, and many more American specimens, all in their native habitats. And Updike is finally also unusual, if not unique, among American writers in consistently focusing on the centrality of religion in the lives of Americans; his fiction has always maintained contact with its characters' faith.

Not a writer of little books, Updike never makes his novels cozy. He is an idea-man, and when he imagines private and domestic life (as he does to best effect in his *Rabbit* novels) he aims to exemplify, interpret, and re-form the larger social world. It is not enough for him—or, consequently, for us—that his novels be well-written, well-plotted, or even well-thought-out. For an entire generation, Updike has seemed on the edge of fulfilling, at last, the promise of explaining ourselves to ourselves.

But with each new book, it has also become more apparent that Updike's explanations of the human condition and of American reality do not, in the end, really explain, and nowhere is the fault more glaring than in his explanation—and therefore in his imaginative rendering—of American religion.

That rendering, in this book, is tediously conventional: the 19th-century "Social Gospel" movement made a devil's pact with capitalism and betrayed true Christianity into the hands of the philistines; the movies are a drug that dulls our awareness of our own religious collapse; it is more truly Christian not to be a Christian, for the only people who now take faith seriously are those delicate souls who know the impossibility of believing at all.

Despite his careful reading of the 20th-century Protestant theologian Karl Barth, Updike's theology has not advanced much beyond the adolescent boy's discovery that the adults in his church are often hypocrites. "I reluctantly perceived of the Christian religion I had been born into," he wrote in his 1989 memoir, *Self-Consciousness*, "that almost no one believed it, believed it really." Somewhere in the 1950's, Updike heard what everyone told him was the roar of the slow but unstoppable withdrawal of the sea of faith, and he has never gotten the sound out of his ears. But he has also never sought a different or a deeper understanding. As the years go by, it shows.

A Life in Battle

Letters of Sidney Hook: Democracy, Communism, and the Cold War
edited by Edward S. Shapiro
M.E. Sharpe. 416 pp. $69.95

Reviewed by
Midge Decter

ON FEBRUARY 18, 1937, the late Sidney Hook wrote a letter—the first of several—to one Jerome Davis. Davis was a professor of sociology at the Yale Divinity School and, to judge from Hook's remonstrations, a once-soft liberal recently turned outright Communist fellow-traveler. At the time, Hook—already well known as a philosopher and an authority on Karl Marx, and as one who had moved from a brief fling with Communism to the anti-Communism which would remain his lifelong passion—was engaged, along with John Dewey, Horace Kallen, Norman Thomas, Franz Boas, and other certified liberals, in an organization called the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky.

This committee had been established to sift the evidence, if any, for Stalin's charges against Trotsky, and it would eventually widen its scope to include the Moscow Trials. And Jerome Davis? He had added his name to a letter, circulated under orders from the Communist Party USA, denouncing the committee with that inimitable vocabulary of scurrility for which the Communists had by the 1930's become famous. Now Hook demanded to know why Davis had joined in this attack, especially in light of the fact that Hook, along with some other members of the

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MIDGE DECTER *was until recently distinguished fellow at the Institute of Religion and Public Life. Her books include* Liberal Parents, Radical Children *and* The Liberated Woman & Other Americans.

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committee, had also been engaged in defending Davis himself, on civil-libertarian grounds, against the Yale Divinity School, which was intending to fire him for ideological reasons.

Hook's correspondence, from which Edward S. Shapiro has chosen this collection, was mammoth—occupying more than 3,000 files in the Hoover Library in California. It seems that no letter to him, no matter how disagreeable or simple-minded, went unanswered. And in addition there is a mountain of letters that he himself initiated: letters to friends, to enemies, to the press, to public figures and politicians. Shapiro's collection is, unhappily, highly selective, focused almost entirely—and rather literal-mindedly—on the problems of Communism and the Communists. Yet reading these letters leads to the conclusion that in some sense Sidney Hook's correspondence over the years was all of a piece, defined by the weighty and often complex question of freedom, particularly intellectual freedom.

As a correspondent, Hook sometimes wrote with affection, and sometimes, though rarely, playfully; but almost never did he engage in merely friendly chat. Though he sometimes complained of having permitted himself to be dragged into politics—his true field, he would say at such moments, was formal philosophy—it is impossible to believe that he really wished to be shed of public responsibility. As this book so vividly, and so chasteningly, reminds us, Sidney Hook was a man who spent his entire life in battle—down, indeed, to virtually his dying moment in 1987, at the age of eighty-five, when a visitor found him sitting on what would prove to be his deathbed with a tablet of yellow foolscap on his knees, composing a letter of protest about something or other to some editor or other.

It would have been unmanageable to include in this volume any of the letters to which Hook was responding. Still, one misses them, not only as an aid to remembrance of ideological warfare past but as a reminder to the uninitiated of the sheer dogged loyalty to principle and indefatigability in argument that were the bone and sinew of this man. Thus: after taxing Jerome Davis both for his disingenuousness and for his ingratitude, Hook sets about in the space of some 600 words to instruct him in the ways of reason, logic, and justice. A week later, Davis having in the meantime obviously replied, Hook is at him again, arguing and scolding:

> You believe, so you write, that "the men who were convicted in Moscow on their own confession were guilty." Does this mean that you believe that Trotsky, who has not confessed and claims that the whole thing is a frame-up, is also guilty? Perhaps he is. The Committee has no view on the matter. All it holds is that the cause of humanity would be served if it were made known whether T. is innocent or guilty.

More than two years later, we find Hook answering a complaint that he had misrepresented Davis's views on the Soviet Union:

> Since you say that you have often and vigorously criticized Russia for its restrictions on liberty and unjustified violence, I shall be very much obliged if you will refer me to the published record of such criticism since 1937.

And again within a week there is another letter, answering Davis's answer.

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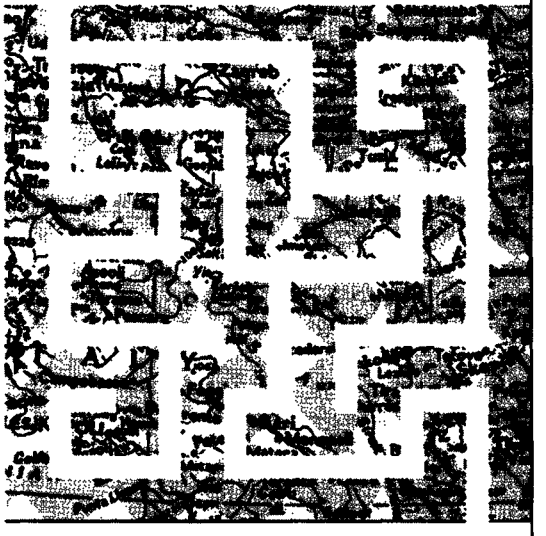

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things in this volume than the correspondence with Davis, just as there would be many more important issues and activities in Hook's long and busy life than the Trotsky Committee. But nothing else here so vividly captures Hook in opposition: stern, strong, and almost unendurably willing to go over and over and over again the elements of the argument he is making. By all accounts, Sidney Hook was a great teacher. No doubt this willingness to rehearse his arguments *ad infinitum*—it was, after all, a willingness drawn from the deepest well of human courtesy, no matter how pugnaciously it was expressed—formed a very large part of his success as an educator. He could be scornful; he could be profoundly irritable; but neither scorn nor irritation ever seemed to get in the way of his passion to convince.

THIS PASSION would be indispensable to Hook in the 1950's, when it was no longer just the Communists and their blind liberal sympathizers who were arrayed against him but an influential group of his fellow anti-Communist liberals and leftists as well. The country had by then reached a more or less general consensus about the nature of the Soviet Union. But there was sharp disagreement—beginning most famously with the Hiss case, and underlined by the controversy surrounding the prosecution for espionage of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg—about the role played (and yet to be played) by America's own homegrown allies of the Soviet Union.

At this point, for those who were not merely anti-anti-Communist, the problem concerned the issue of civil liberties. And here for a goodly number of years Sidney Hook was to earn the disaffection of all but a tiny handful of his fellow intellectuals. For, on the strength of his conviction that those loyal to the Communist party were not merely expressing a political commitment but were in fact taking orders from a hostile foreign power, he supported a highly controversial view. In the case of anyone being considered for an academic appointment, Hook held that membership in the party should be taken as *prima-facie* evidence—not proof, but evidence—of an unfitness to teach. This view, articulated in a number of magazine articles and in a little book called *Heresy, Yes—Conspiracy NO!*, caused an uproar among Hook's academic colleagues and, in addition to requiring him to write endless letters, made his name a byword in the lexicon of political insult.

THE GREAT impediment to the anti-Communists of the 50's, and especially to Hook, was Senator Joseph McCarthy and the investigative activity that came to be associated with his name. Because of the potential smirch of McCarthyism, every proposal to deal with the problem of Communist subversion and disloyalty had first of all to be defined by what it was not. On occasion this made for almost unmanageable complexity. "I am beginning to despair of getting what I say *understood* . . . ," Hook writes to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. on March 18, 1953:

> For your comments seem to assume that I support the general rule of "automatic exclusion [of Communists from employment in teaching] on the grounds of party membership alone." But I specifically dissociated myself from this position . . . *and have always done so.*

In outlining how he wants Schlesinger and others to understand his actual position, Hook goes on to explain that, "*because of the nature of that organization and its educational directives*," membership in the Communist party is indeed, for him, grounds for investigation by a faculty committee. But, with one exception, such a committee should not investigate classroom practices. The exception is if an individual is exploiting his position in the university to disseminate party-line lies (the example Hook cites is the propaganda circulated during the Korean conflict that the U.S. was using bacteriological warfare).

Hook's letter to Schlesinger was written in the hope that the two might reach an agreement on "an intelligent and liberal formulation." Small wonder that Hook should complain of the difficulty in making himself understood. In the abstract, perhaps, his own formulation—that any and all heretical ideas should be permitted in the classroom, but doing the propagandistic bidding of a party loyal to a hostile foreign power should be ruled out—might have sounded persuasive. Politically, however, both the distinctions he wished to draw and the means he proposed for realizing them were quite impracticable. That is sometimes the fatal weakness of the friends of democratic society in the face of radical assault.

This same weakness would be given even more dramatic expression in the late 60's and early 70's, when the country's most active internal enemies neither concealed themselves nor submitted to the discipline of a foreign power. Unfortunately, Shapiro has included only a sprinkling of letters from these years, although it is beyond imagining that Hook was not then a busy correspondent. There was campus "unrest"; there was the Vietnam war, of which he was a vocal supporter; and there was all the rest. As ever greater numbers of his colleagues gave way before the new wave of radicalism that would in short order become the dominant ethos of the country's academic and intellectual life—and thence of the life of the liberal community in general—Hook remained, as ever, loyal to what he believed and what he knew and what he remembered.

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In the last decades of his life, some of what he believed and some of what he remembered created certain difficulties for those, especially among neoconservatives, who were his truest admirers. They, after all, had traveled a considerable intellectual distance over the years to arrive at last at the political point where he had always been. But he on his side remained so infernally, so obdurately, *unreconstructed*.

At one point in his late years, for example, when he was gravely ill, Hook declared that he wanted to be allowed to die. His request was—blessedly—ignored; and as it turned out, he had a number of productive years to go. For many of his friends, his attitude made little sense. Whatever he was suffering, how could someone as virile and combative as Sidney Hook really wish to depart this earth? Yet here, in the course of a letter written as early as 1961, is Hook declaring himself "a devoted member of the Euthanasia Society." In other words, he had—devotedly—supported the idea of helping the gravely ill to die long before, with a dreadful consistency of mind, he came to apply the logic of this idea to himself.

The question of euthanasia is connected to the larger question of his ideas about God and religion. It was not just that he was no believer himself. While sometimes pretending to tolerate, he did not really respect, and certainly did not come near to comprehending, religious faith in others. In later years he may have softened his tone somewhat in addressing the subject, but there is every reason to think that he ended as he began: an atheist and an anticlerical of a very old-fashioned kind. In several of the letters from the 1950's, there are references to the Vatican that are positively startling to a contemporary reader, less for their hostility than for their Paul Blanshard-like crudity. Such references, one feels, derive not so much from the mind of Sidney Hook the philosopher of pragmatism as from a certain carry-over of Sidney Hook the youthful and combative Marxist.

Along with his atheism, another thing about Hook that proved difficult for many of his friends and admirers to get around was his undying insistence that he remained, no matter what, a democratic socialist. For the most part, these friends simply refused to take his declaratory positions seriously. And to some extent they were perfectly justified in doing so, for Hook's loyalty to socialist democracy made not the slightest difference to his political behavior, and in any case the socialist democracy he claimed to believe in never did exist, and never will. Still, holding to this position was a small personal luxury of irrelevance which he continued to afford himself, and which none of his friends, at least, attempted to deny him.

ALMOST NOTHING of this—key to a real grasp of the unique role played by so extraordinary and irreplaceable a man—is allowed expression within the far too narrow definition of topics Shapiro has set for himself. Thus the rich complications that are so vital to the telling of Hook's story fade away on these pages. When the cold war began, the intellectual Left in America boasted a fair number of anti-Communists and pro-Americans; but, of the latter in particular, few if any had stayed the course with Hook by the time it ended. To understand him in those days is to understand the most important part of his legacy to us.

Be that as it may, in the 1980's the kind of official public honors that had long been due him were at last bestowed. By a happy irony, it was the Reagan administration that saw fit properly to honor this would-be unreconstructed socialist. And Hook accepted with a grace and a gratitude far beyond

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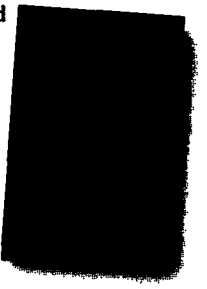

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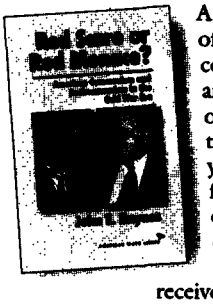

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what might have been the expected response to an acknowledgment so long deserved and so long withheld. That, too, is part of his legacy—about which, one day, perhaps a fitting book will be written.

Unsentimental Journey

The Ends of the Earth:
A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century
by Robert D. Kaplan
Random House. 476 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
Francis Fukuyama

ROBERT KAPLAN, who has written interestingly on topics ranging from State Department Arabists to Balkan warlords, attracted national attention early in 1995 with the publication of an article in the *Atlantic* entitled "The Coming Anarchy." There Kaplan argued that environmental degradation and conflict over scarce resources were producing political and social breakdown throughout the third world, and that the resulting deterioration of institutions, including the nation-state itself, would become a paradigm for much of the post-cold-war world, eventually touching even the United States.

Though the article was much discussed in foreign-policy circles at the time—President Clinton reportedly ordered his national-security staff to consider how to shape a policy around its themes—it was not really a convincing piece of work. Kaplan, it seemed to me, had simply traveled to the most troubled nations in the world—Liberia, Sierra Leone, Bosnia, and so forth—and arrived arbitrarily at the judgment that their problems constituted a pattern for the entire globe. His conclusion ignored the fact that large parts of Latin America and Asia were developing rapidly and moving to ever more advanced levels of sociopolitical organization.

The foreign-policy implications that emerged from Kaplan's paradigm also appeared wrongheaded: rather than seeing political violence as something caused by specific political actors, he placed the blame on impersonal forces like environmental degradation and population growth, about which outside powers could do little. And instead of providing concrete guidelines for where and how America should involve itself in world affairs, his article laid the basis for a universal and inconsequential do-goodism carried out by international agencies around the globe.

IN *The Ends of the Earth*, Kaplan has returned to the themes of his earlier essay, but he presents them now in a far more nuanced and persuasive manner. In particular, the overarching Malthusianism of the original article has been replaced by a recognition that the driving forces behind third-world problems are not scarcity and environmental limits, but rather a diverse set of cultural problems. He illustrates this proposition in a vividly written memoir of what must have been an exhausting journey, one that took him from West Africa through Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, various points in Central Asia, China, Pakistan, India, and finally to Thailand and the jungles of Cambodia. As a piece of travel literature alone, *The Ends of the Earth* succeeds in providing a tangible sense of the sweaty, smelly reality of many exotic points on the map, with glimpses of their cruelty but also, occasionally, of beauty and human kindness. As a piece of analysis, it is deeply thought-provoking.

BY FAR the most interesting and troubling section of the book is its opening chapters on West Africa. The decline in recent decades of what was already the world's poorest region has been stunning. The per-capita GDP in sub-Saharan Africa has been falling almost every year over this period; even by the optimistic assumptions of the World Bank, it would take four decades for the region to return to the level of income it enjoyed in the early 1970's. In countries like Liberia, Togo, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, not only the state has broken down but so has virtually every other social institution.

Without, I suspect, explicitly intending to do so, Kaplan presents a stinging indictment of African culture. The traditional system of extended families has combined with a degraded version of Islam to produce a pattern in which fathers take multiple wives, produce tens of children, and see leisure as a mark of social status. While the old model of family structure may have functioned with some degree of success in the communal agricultural setting where it originally developed, once transplanted to the urban shantytowns into which millions of African peasants have moved over the past decades it has helped pave the way for disaster.

In contrast to those Asian societies in which extended families form rotating credit associations to funnel capital into small businesses, West Africa seems to feature rotating consumption circles in which relatives and neighbors join together to dissipate savings. Economic dissolution, moreover, has crossed with traditional beliefs to produce a human cataclysm. Kinship ties have disintegrated; parents take no special responsibility for their biological offspring; and children end up raising other

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children. The result is a world like that of *Lord of the Flies*, inhabited by lawless bands of armed children and teenagers, too disorganized even to be labeled militias but dangerous enough to make life in cities like Freetown in Sierra Leone and Monrovia in Liberia intolerable.

In "The Coming Anarchy," Kaplan had suggested that West Africa was typical of the third world. In *The Ends of the Earth*, he distinguishes the social disintegration there from the situation in other, stronger societies. Some of these societies are also Islamic. In the poorest sections of Ankara, Turkey, for example,

> there is no problem of alcoholism. Crime is infinitesimal. Poverty and illiteracy are milder versions of what obtains in Algeria and Egypt. Slums—in the sociological sense—are rare . . . . Here the mortar within and between family groups is strong: It is a civilization with natural muscle tone.

Or here is contemporary Iran,

> a society, like Turkey's, with a strong social mortar, a society that you didn't need to feel sorry for. Foreign diplomats and aid workers did not sit around in Teheran—as they did in Lagos and Nairobi—exchanging stories about this colleague who was robbed and that colleague who had just installed iron bars over her windows.

This is not to say that Islam's darker side, in Iran or elsewhere, is slighted in Kaplan's account. But the cross-cultural comparisons he presents make a strong case for the superiority of religious cultures that are capable of socializing and disciplining populations into families, neighborhoods, and communities. One might also say that the evidence from Kaplan's book supports Samuel Huntington's much criticized thesis that for many regions of the world, cultural boundaries are far more important than actual political ones.

BUT HOW does all this affect us? Even if he no longer adheres to the apocalyptic vision of his *Atlantic* essay, Kaplan still believes that as social breakdown in the third world intensifies, and the disparities between the world's rich and poor become vastly greater, wealthy powers like the United States will feel the consequences. But for all the passion with which he advances this point, it is never entirely clear why it should be so. Those societies contending with scarcity and environmental limits are, as Kaplan himself shows, suffering from wounds inflicted by their own incompetence or cultural failure. But the sad truth of the matter is that their institutional and political meltdown has not raised so much as a blip on the radar screens of the first world.

The one striking exception involves the black communities described in Kaplan's unsentimental journey. At least according to his report, their problems—family breakdown, extreme atomization, lack of social structure—are similar in widely disparate places, whether in Africa, Haiti, or the inner cities of America. In Kaplan's judgment the causes of this failure are once again cultural rather than racial; he explicitly attacks the racist analyses of earlier travelers like Richard Burton. But in buttressing his assertion that dire conditions in the third world can ultimately affect the United States, he points not only to dangers lurking in America's future but to one haunting its past: "by taking human booty away from the Slave Coast, America had unwittingly begun the process by which the problems of West Africa could one day become its own."

Whatever one makes of this striking and controversial assertion, it remains the case that in most respects, the West is immune to the really dire sorts of social decay characteristic of the broken societies Kaplan has toured. Of these societies, however, he is an intrepid and unfailingly clear-eyed chronicler, and *The Ends of the Earth* is a thoroughly engaging book.

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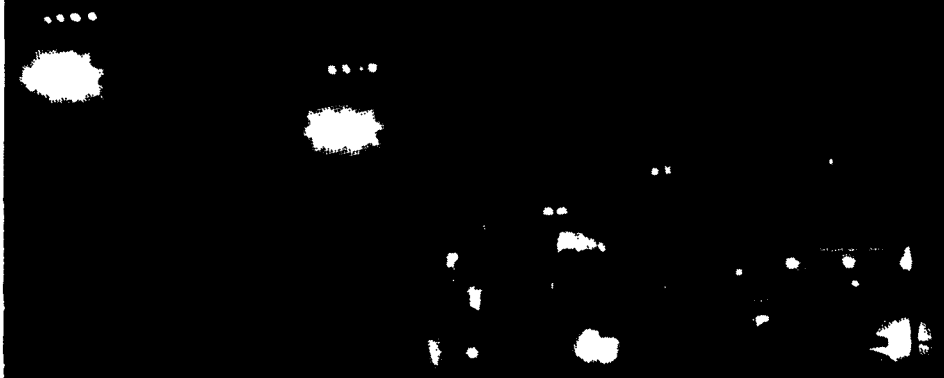

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